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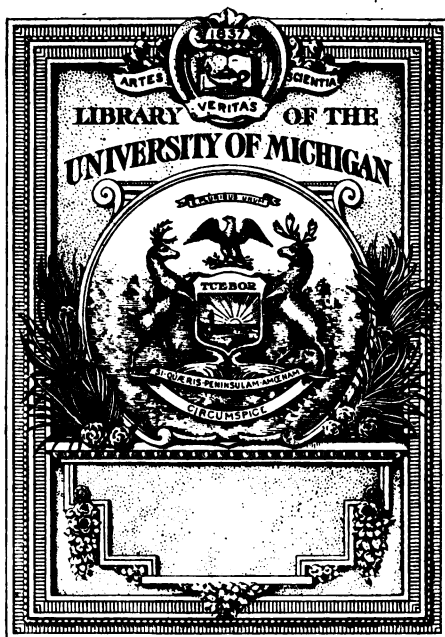
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THE GIFT OF
Sidney C. Eastman



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CORTES:

OR

THE FALL OF MEXICO.



BY DR. BIRD,

AUTHOR OF "CALAVAR."

IN THREE VOLUMES:

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CORTES,

OR

THE FALL OF MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Ovid describes the memorable encounter between Perseus and the great sea-monster of Ethiopia, he is at the pains to narrate with what fury the creature *snapped at the shadow* of the flying hero,—a circumstance of trivial importance in itself, though both striking and characteristic; nay, he even relates how the warrior, at the first sight of the fair Andromeda, chained to the rock, and waiting to be devoured,

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was so moved with admiration that he forgot, for an instant, to flap his wings,—another detail of more fitness than moment. Thus stooping to the consideration of trifles, the poet does not scruple entirely to pass by matters of the most palpable consequence. He disdains, for example, to tell us even whether the monster *died* or not in the encounter, leaving that to be inferred; and, in like manner, he scorns even to answer the question that might have been anticipated, namely, *why* Perseus, like a sensible soldier, did not whip out his gorgon's head, instead of his 'crooked sword,' and, by turning the beast into stone, save himself the trouble of despatching him with his steel.

The writer of historical works, like the present, must claim the privilege of the poet, and be allowed, while expatiating on events of interest so inferior that they have been almost rejected by his predecessors, to leave many others of manifest importance to be supplied, not indeed by the imagination, but by the learn-

ing of the reader. Our only desire is to follow the adventures of two individuals, so obscure and so unfortunate, that the worthy and somewhat over-conscientious Bernal Diaz del Castillo has despatched the whole history of the first in the few vague fragments which we have prefixed to the story; while he has scrupulously abstained from saying a single word of the second.

If the reader will turn to the pages of this conscientious historian, of De Solis, or of Clavigero, he will be made acquainted with the stirring exploits of the eight or nine weeks that followed after the arrest of Juan Lerma. In this time, the Captain-General, at the head of all the Spaniards, save those who were left in garrison at Tezcuco, and the few sailors and shipwrights who remained in the dock-yards, to preside over Indian artificers, compelled to work at the brigantines—in this time, we say, and at the head of this force, assisted by many thousand Tlascalans, Cortes commenced and

completed the circuit of the whole valley, storming and burning cities and towns without number, resisted valiantly in all that were not disaffected, and sometimes, as at the city of Tacuba, repulsed with great loss and no little dishonour. The whole campaign abounds with singular and exciting incidents, of which, however, it does not suit our purpose to mention any but one, and that almost in a word. At the city of Xochimilco, or the Garden of Flowers, (for this is the signification of the word,) where the resistance was sanguinary and noble, though, in the end, ineffectual, Cortes was wounded, surrounded, struck down from his horse, which was killed, and he himself, for a moment, a prisoner ; and he owed his life and liberty only to the extraordinary valour of Gaspar Olea of the Red Beard, who, with the help of a few resolute Tlascalans, succeeded in bringing him off. The aid thus rendered by Olea was the more remarkable since, from the moment of Juan's arrest, he had become sullen,

morose, and was sometimes even charged to be mutinous. In this last imputation, however, as far as it implied any treasonable thoughts or practices, the rude Gaspar was wronged. His dissatisfaction was caused solely by the fall and anticipated fate of his young captain. The heinousness of Juan's crime—the drawing his sword upon an officer in the execution of his duty, as Guzman had been, and worse yet, the aiming of that at the breast of the General—had left it, apparently, impossible to be forgiven. It was universally expected that Juan would expiate the crime with his life; and the only wonder was, that he had not been immediately tried, condemned, and executed. His destiny was therefore anticipated with more curiosity than doubt, and apparently with less pity than either. Gaspar did not attempt to deny Juan's guilt; but when he remembered the sufferings and perils they had shared together, his heart burned with fury, to think

how soon the brave and well-beloved youth should die the death of a caitiff. His dissatisfaction expended itself in anger towards the Captain-General; and hence the surprise of his comrades at his act of daring and generosity. But Gaspar had his own ends in view, when he saved the life of Cortes.

It was now many weeks since his arrest, and Juan yet lay in imprisonment, ignorant not so much of his fate, as of the causes which delayed it. On the fourth day of his captivity, he was apprized, by the sound of trumpets and artillery, the cries of men, and the neighing of horses, and, in general, by the prodigious bustle which accompanies the setting out of an army from a populous city, that some enterprise was meditated and begun; but of its character he was kept wholly ignorant. The custody of his person seemed to be committed to Villafana and the hunchback Najara, conjointly; but it was observable that, although Najara fre-

quently entered his den alone, Villafana never made his appearance without being accompanied by the Corcobado.

From Najara he gained not a word of intelligence, the hunchback ever replying to his questions with scowls, or with pithy sarcasms in allusion to the crimes of treason and mutiny. From Villafana, attended, and, as it seemed to Juan, watched, by the jealous Najara, he obtained nothing but unmeaning nods of the head, and sometimes looks, too significant to be doubted, and yet too oraculous to be understood.

After the first fortnight, Villafana failed to visit him altogether, and he saw not the face of a human being, except once each morning, when Najara was accustomed to make his appearance, followed by an Indian slave, bearing food and a jar of water. With this latter being, a decrepit old man, on whose naked shoulder was inscribed the horrible letter G, (for *guerra*, indicating that he was a prisoner of war,—in

other words, a branded bondman), he endeavoured to speak, using all the native dialects with which he was acquainted ; but, though Najara made no offer to prevent such conversation, the barbarian replied only by touching his ear and then his breast, signifying thereby that, though he heard the words, he did not understand them. Though Najara permitted these little attempts at speech, with contemptuous indifference, Juan perceived that he ever kept his eyes fastened upon the Indian, as if to prevent any effort at communication of another sort. Thus, if any benevolent friend had endeavoured to convey a message by letter or otherwise, it was apparent that Najara took the best steps to insure its miscarriage.

Foiled thus in every attempt to exchange thoughts with a fellow-being, and reduced to commune only with his own, the unhappy prisoner ceased, at last, to make any effort ; and, yielding gradually to a despair that was not the less consuming for being entirely with-

out complaint, he began, in the end, to be indifferent even to the coming and presence of his gaoler, neither rising to meet him, nor even lifting his eyes from the floor, on which they were fixed with a lethargic dejection.

He became also indifferent to his food ; and once, when Najara entered, he perceived that the water-jar, the dish of *tortillas*, or maize-cakes, the savoury wild-fowl, and the fragrant *chocolatl*, (for in regard to food, he was liberally supplied,) stood upon the little table, where they had been placed the day before, untasted and even untouched. He cast his eyes upon the youth, and, for the first time, began to feel a sentiment of pity for his condition. Indeed, the noble figure of the young man was beginning to waste away ; his cheeks were hollow, his neglected beard was springing uncouthly over his lips, and his sunken eyes drooped upon the earth, as if never more to gleam with the light of hope and pleasure. The hunchback hesitated for a moment, and then growled out

a few words,—the first he had uttered for a week. But these, though commiseration prompted them, he succeeded in making expressive only of scorn or anger.

“Hark you, señor Juan Lerma,” he said, “do you mean to starve?”

At the sound of his voice, so unusual and so unexpected, the young man raised his eyes, but with a vague, wo-begone look, and answered nothing.

“I say, señor,” continued Najara, somewhat more blandly, “is it your will to die by starvation rather than in any other way?”

“Ah, Najara! is it thou?” said Juan, rising feebly, or indolently, to his feet. “Heaven give you a good morrow.”

“Pshaw!” returned the gaoler, gruffly; “pray me no such prayers: keep them for yourself. I ask you, if it be your purpose to starve yourself to death, out of a mere unsoldierly fear of hanging?”

“Thou hast not said so much to me, I know

not when," replied the youth, not with any intention of shuffling off the question, but speaking of what was uppermost in his mind. His voice was very mild, and Najara, by no means without his weaker points, felt it as a reproach.

"I care not," he replied, "if I answer you any two or three questions, that may be nearest to your heart. But first give me to know, wherefore you have eaten nothing? Are you sick?"

"Surely I am, at heart; but, bodily, I am well."

"And you are not resolute to die of hunger before the judgment-day?—Pho, if you have that spirit, perhaps it were better. But it is a death of great torment.—Yet, why should one be afraid of the shame? 'Tis nothing when we are dead."

"Is this thy fear then?" said Juan, patiently. "It is not permitted us to commit suicide in any form. I will eat, to satisfy thee; but food is bitter in prison."

"What a pity," muttered Najara, as Juan ate a morsel of food, "that heaven should give thee such a goodly and godlike body, and such a brave soul, (for, o' my life, I believe thou art entirely without fear), and yet make thee a madman and traitor!"

"A traitor!" said Juan, without taking any offence, for, indeed, he seemed to have been robbed of all the fire of his spirit. "It is not possible anybody can believe me a traitor."

"Pho! did I not, with mine own eyes, see thee plunge at Cortes? It is base of thee to deny it."

"I do not deny it," said Juan; adding, vehemently, "but I call heaven to witness, I saw not his face, and knew him not. He may persecute me to death, as I believe he is doing. Yet could I do him no wrong; no, I *think* I could not.—But it is bitter to feel we are trampled on!"

"Well, señor, it is better you should be in a

passion than a trance. But be not utterly without hope. If you can truly make it appear you knew not the general, it is thought by one or two you may be pardoned. I have talked with Guzman; and I think he may be brought to forgive and even intercede for you."

"I will neither receive *his* forgiveness nor *his* intercession," said Juan, frowning. "And I wonder you mention to me his detested name."

"Oh, señor!" said Najara, sharply, "you may choose your own friends, and hunt them again among heathen Indians. — That you should sell your life for this dog of a noble! — Fare you well, señor, fare you well."

"Stay, Najara," said Juan, following him towards the door: "you said you would answer me such questions as were nearest ~~my~~ heart. Give not over the kindly thought. There are many things, which if I knew, my lot would not be so hard, my dungeon not so killing to my spirit. The army is gone — is Mexico invested?"

"Not so," replied the hunchback; "it has a month or two's grace yet.—The troops have marched against the shore-towns.—But for this mad fit, thou mightest have been with them, or making thyself famous at Tochtepec!"

Juan sighed heavily.

"And the Indian, of whom you spoke,—the young noble,—Olin the orator?" he demanded, at first not without hesitation.

"Oh, the cur," replied Najara; "I think Cortes was even as mad as thyself, touching the knave. But wit is like a river, sometimes too full, washing away its own banks—it may be said to drown itself.—He made the dog his ambassador, swore him to return faithfully from Guatimozin, and waited three days for him in vain. Such rogues are like arrows,—good weapons when you have the cast of them, but not to be expected in hand again, unless shot back by a foeman."

It was fortunate, perhaps, that Najara had relaxed so far from his austerity as to resume

the vein of metaphor common to his softer moments. Had he been as observant as usual, he must have been struck with suspicion at the sudden gleam of satisfaction with which Juan heard the good fortune of the Mexican. But he marked it not.

"Tell me now," said Juan, "how thou comest to be my gaoler; and why it is that Villafana seems to have given up his trust to thee?"

At this question Najara's good-humour immediately vanished, and he replied, sourly,

"Oh, content you, you shall be in good keeping."

"I doubt it not," said Juan, calmly. "But Villafana is, or methinks he is, more friendly to me than you. I did but desire to know what changes had taken place in the government of the city, from the watchman up to the commandant, since my imprisonment."

"Ay, indeed!" replied Najara, grimly: "such changes, that hadst thou fifty friends

waiting to aid thee, thou shouldst be caught, before getting twenty steps from the door. Know then, that I am made Alguazil, as well as Villafana; and what is more, I am captain of the prison. The Alcalde is Antonio de Quinones, master of the armory; and the Corregidor of the city is thy good friend Guzman,—an honour thou gavest him, by hacking his face so freely, and so leaving him in the hospital.”

“You speak to me in sarcasm,” said Juan, mildly: “I have not deserved it. And methinks you should be more generous of temper, than to oppress with words of insult, a fallen and helpless man.—Well, heed it not—I forgive you. I have but one more question to ask you.—The lady,—this lady, La Monjonaza—”

“Ay!” cried Najara, with singular bitterness, “I have heard of that too. You were seen talking with her in the garden. You will play chamberer with Cortes! ay, and rival too!

Pho, canst thou not be at peace? Meddle with the general's fancy. Why, that were enough to hang thee. I had some soft thoughts of thee; but everything shows thou art unworthy. Farewell; think of these things no more; but repent and make your peace with heaven."

So saying, the hunchback flung out of the room, and securing the thick door of plank, Juan was again left to his meditations.

CHAPTER II.

THEN followed another period of silence and dejection, in which the prisoner wasted away as much in body as in spirit, becoming so listlessly indifferent to every thing, that he no longer betrayed any desire to draw Najara into conversation, nor even to meet the advances which his gaoler now often made. The thought of escaping from confinement, perhaps, never entered his mind ; for, had he been even less resigned to his fate, the strict watch kept over him, and the condition of his prison, added to his apparent friendlessness, must have been enough to banish all such thoughts. His

chamber was neither dark nor damp, but made strong by its bulky door, barred on the outside, and by windows high above the floor, so very narrow that no human being could hope to pass through them.

Narrow as they were, however, it was the gaoler's custom to examine them very closely each morning; a degree of vigilance that Juan had, in the earlier days of captivity, remarked with some surprise. He became acquainted with Najara's object at last. One morning he was roused out of his stupefaction by a harsh exclamation from his gaoler, and looking up, he beheld him take from the floor, immediately under one of the loopholes, what seemed a slip of paper tied to a little stick, which appeared, some time during the night, to have been thus thrust into the prison. What were its contents he never could divine; for Najara had no sooner cast his eyes over it, than mingling a laugh of satisfaction at its miscarriage, with some natural compassion for the profound

wretchedness which had sealed the ears and eyes of the prisoner, he immediately departed with the prize.

From this time, Juan became more vigilant and wary; but the following night, he was admonished by the clank of armour and the occasional sound of voices without, that sentinels were now stationed under the windows, thus precluding all hope of friendly communication from that quarter.

Before he had again entirely relapsed into his listless gloom, he began to have a vague consciousness that the Indian slave, who accompanied Najara, was becoming more officious than of old, in setting his meals before him, and particularly in placing the jar of water at his side, instead of depositing it on his table, as he had done before. His suspicion was confirmed when, one morning, as Najara was making his wonted survey of the windows, the slave gave him a quick, impatient look, and shaking the jar as he set it down, made

him sensible, by a rattling sound within it, that there was something besides the innocent element concealed at the bottom. As soon as Najara had departed, he made an examination of the mystery, and drew forth, with some astonishment, a plate of transparent obsidian, on which had been scratched by some hard instrument or precious stone, a few words which he was soon able to decypher. "If thou wilt leave Mexico, and live, take the stone from the pitcher."

He strode about the apartment for a moment in disorder; then, crushing the glassy temptation under his heel, and returning the fragments to the jar, he sat down again to brood over his despair.—The next morning the pitcher contained nothing but water.

Thus, then, the time passed away, in the ordinary listlessness of confinement,—the dull and sleepy torture of solitude; until Najara, waxing more compassionate as his prisoner grew more obviously indifferent to light, to

food, and to speech, bethought him of a mode of indulgence from which no danger could be apprehended, and accordingly introduced the dog Befo into the apartment.

The loud yells of joy with which Befo beheld his young master, recalled Juan from his lethargy; and Najara was touched still further with compunction at the sight of the animal's transports.

"He has been whining every day at the prison gate," he muttered; "and doubtless he would have whined full as much, though he were to be let in only to be beaten. Such a fond fool is this young Juan himself: he returns to his master, though he knows the scourge is ready. It were better he had taken my advice, and passed to the sea by Otumba. He should have known Cortes would never forgive him."

The presence of this faithful animal, if it did not recall Juan's spirits, at least preserved him from sinking further into stupefaction;

and nothing gave him more evident delight, than when, each morning, having prevailed upon Najara to lead his dumb companion into the air for exercise, he could hear Befo, in the joy of a liberty which he did not share, dashing frantically through the garden, now coursing by the water-side, now prancing by the palace, and all the time, yelping and barking with the most clamorous delight. From these daily sorties the dog was used to return, with fresh spirits and increased attachment, to share, for the remainder of the day, the confinement of his master, upon whom, at his entrance, he jumped and fawned almost as boisterously as when enjoying his sports in the garden.

One day, however, he returned with a much graver aspect than usual, and stalking up to where Juan sat, he stood, wagging his tail, and gazing up with a look exceedingly knowing and significant. Somewhat surprised at this, and finding that Befo refused, even when in-

vited, to begin his usual rough expressions of friendship, he took him by the leathern collar, by which the servants of Cortes had been wont to secure him at night, and pulled him towards him. The motion of the collar released a little packet, that had been carefully secured beneath it, and which now fell upon Juan's knee. As soon as the sagacious animal perceived that he had accomplished a task, not often committed to such a messenger, he returned to his usual demonstrations of satisfaction; and, for a moment, Juan was unable to examine the singular missive. When Beto became composed, he opened it, and read, with no little agitation, the following words: "Not for *me*, but for thyself.—There is but a day more to choose. Leave Mexico, and shed not thine own blood: make not thy friends curse thee.—Return but a fragment of the paper, or tie but a hair round the collar,—and thou shalt be saved.—Not for *me*, but for *thyself*."

The morning came, and Juan, taking the paper from his bosom, tore it to pieces. When Najara offered as usual to liberate the dog, he perceived that Juan held him fast by the collar.

"How now, señor, shall the dog play?"

"It is cruel to rob him of his hour's liberty," said Juan, with a subdued voice; "but, this day, suffer him to remain with me."

"Well señor, as you will," said Najara; "but I would you had some better friend,—at least, some one who could counsel you. There are runners arrived from the northern towns; and at midday, Cortes will march into the city."

"The better reason, then, that I should have this friend, who have no other," said Juan, calmly.

"Harkee, señor," said Najara, with a sort of petulant sympathy, "if you would but curse yourself and your foes, or bemoan your

fate a little, I should like it better than this stupid, womanish resignation. — Hark ye,—I care not if I tell you: I thought you had come athwart the fancies of Don Hernan, in the matter of the Doña, not that Don Hernan had wronged your own: I knew not that there was any old love between you.”

“What art thou speaking of, Najara?” said Juan, with a hasty and troubled voice.

“This does, in some sense, weaken the sin of drawing sword upon him,” continued the hunchback, “for no man loves to be robbed of his mistress.—Well,—the señora is sorry for you.—She thought to bribe me to let her speak with you.—Bribe me!—And yet I pitied her, for she was sorely distressed.”

“For God’s sake,” exclaimed Juan, in extreme suffering, “speak me not a word of her; let me not hear her name.”

“Well, be not cast down; she has much power with the general, and doubtless, she

will plead for you. Well, fare you well.—I did think to let Cortes know of her acts: but that might harden him against you still more.—Why should I waste thought upon him,” muttered the deformed as he passed from the prison. “It is hard, or it seems hard, that heaven should give up a frame so beautiful and majestic, to be marred by the hangman’s axe or rope, and leave a deformed lump like me, to scare little Indian girls and boys, and to be jibed at by all the craven loons of the army. But this is naught: if I am crooked, I am neither fool, traitor, nor coward, as most others are, in one degree or other, and sometimes in all.”

As Najara had foretold, the army returned to Tezcuco about noon, as was made evident to Juan, by the sound of trumpets and cannon, and other warlike noises of rejoicing; which, continuing to fill the city for many hours, came to his ears like the tumult of

a distant storm, and began to die away only when the last twinkle of sunset, shooting through his narrow windows, had faded from the opposite wall.

CHAPTER III.

It was now midnight. Audience after audience, and council after council, in the great hall of the palace, had shown how rapidly were approaching to a climax the involved events and schemes which had for their object the overthrow of the Indian empire, as well as some that looked to an end equally dark, though of less public import. The Captain-General had despatched several audiences entirely of a private nature, and hoped to be relieved of his toil while discharging from his presence an individual already known to the reader as Gaspar of the Red Beard. Whatever might have been the

subject of the conference, its conclusion was unsatisfactory to both parties, for Olea departed with a visage both sullen and vindictive, while Cortes strode to and fro, evidently affected by vexation and anger.

As Olea, who had long since got rid of the 'infidel gait,' which had drawn a remark from Cortes, and which, doubtless assumed to assist his disguise, only adhered to him through habit,—as he vanished through the great door, another character made his appearance, entering by one of those doors which opened from the garden. It was the señor Camarga; who, from the friar's habit, again flung over his armour, seemed to have been engaged a second time in his maskings.

"What news, señor? what news hast thou?" demanded Cortes in a low voice, making a sign to the visiter to imitate his cautiousness. "Hast thou gathered aught of my dog Villafana? By my conscience, we are at a

fault; the fox is scared into virtue: Najara hath seen no ill in him, Guzman avers he hath detected no sign of guilt, and not a spy is there of all, who does not swear that his fright in the matter of Olin, (that knave, too, cajoled me!) has reduced him into submission and honesty. Hast thou found nothing?"

"Nothing to be thought of perhaps," replied Camarga. "Villaflana is either returned to his allegiance, as your excellency hints, or he is too deep in distrust to confer with me any further. He swears, if one could believe him, that he has thought better of his schemes, and is now resolved that they were foolish and unjust,—and therefore that he has ended them."

"He lies, the rogue!" said Cortes; "you have pursued him too closely.—It was an ill thought to league Najara with him.—These things have made him suspicious, not penitent. I have taken the hunch-

back away, restored Villafana to his prisonward, and, in short, taken all means to seduce him into security. You will see the cloven foot again, and that right shortly."

"Perhaps what I have to say will make your excellency believe it is displayed already. He has admitted one to speak with the prisoner—"

"Hah!" cried Cortes,—“a file of spearmen!—But no; it matters not. There is no fear of escape; and this were too aimless an explosion. Know you the person he has admitted?”

“I do not,” said Camarga; “but from the glance of the garment, methought ’twas some such godly brother as myself. And yet ’twas a taller man than Olmedo.”

“By my conscience,” said Cortes, quickly, “methinks I can divine the mystery: but of that anon. Hark thee, friend Camarga, dost thou still burn for this wretched man’s life? I tell thee, there is much interces-

sion made for him. It was but a moment since that the Barba-Roxa,—a good soldier, i'faith,—made certain fierce moans for him, mingled with divers mutinous reproaches. I vow to Heaven, I could have struck the knave dead, but that he saved my life at Xochimilco."

"I have heard that Juan Lerma did the same thing on the plains of Tlascala," replied Camarga drily.

"Thou art deceived!" exclaimed Don Hernan, with a sudden shudder. "The attempt, I grant you, the attempt he made; but I needed no help. Yet do I remember the act; and, by heaven, I would I might forgive him,—I would I might! I would I might! for the thought of judging him to death is like a wolf in my bosom. Once I loved him as my son,—yes, as my very son," he repeated with extraordinary agitation; "and when he played with my little children, I swear I looked upon him

but as their elder brother. What will men say of the act since they cannot know the cause?"

Apparently Camarga looked upon this burst of relenting feeling, (for such it really was,) with too much dissatisfaction and alarm, to notice the allusion to a cause differing from any with which he was acquainted. He exclaimed hastily, and with a darkening visage,

"If open mutiny and resistance be not excuse enough, have I not spoken an argument that should steel thy heart for ever? Shall I utter it again? I swear to thee then, that this miserable creature, Magdalena,—this wretch that even thou wouldst have made the slave of thy pleasures, and thereby added upon thy soul a sin never to be forgiven,—no, never!—is a true NUN, —forsworn, lost, condemned! Wilt thou refuse to punish the author of a horrible impiety? Would that I had strangled her,

when an infant, though with mine own hand!—Thou talkest of a wolf in thy bosom; couldst thou feel one fang of the agony, that this act of horror has planted in mine, thou wouldst deem thyself happy. Let the wretch die; ask not for further cause; think not of any.”

“The cause is, indeed, enough,” said Cortes, crossing himself with dread, “to ensure, not death only, but a death at the stake of fire; and I am not one to think the punishment should be made easy. I could tell thee a story of the end of broken vows, and the vengeance of God upon the robber of convents; but it needs not.—Sleep in thy grave, poor wretch! and be forgotten.” He muttered a few words to himself, and then banishing with an effort what seemed a mournful recollection, he resumed,—“Tell me but one thing, Camarga, and I am satisfied. The cause is enough, (though

this is a crime to be judged by ecclesiastics,) to ensure the young man's fate; but it is not enough to explain the rancour of thy hatred. Speak me the truth—is this unhappy creature child of thine?"

"Think so, if thou wilt," said Camarga, with a lip ashy and quivering, "but ask not, ask not now. Give the young man to the block, and commit the girl into my hands, with the means of leaving this land; then, if thou hast the courage to listen, thou shalt hear a story that will freeze thy blood.—Is he not guilty of this thing?"

"Is he not guilty of more?" muttered the Captain-General. "It is enough: thou hast steeled my heart. I leave him in the hands of the Alcaldes and De Olid, who have no such faintness of heart as confounds mine. Fare thee well, señor: I know thee better, and I like thee well. Turn not thine eye from Villafana."

Thus, mingling the suggestions of a native policy with passions not the less constitutional, Cortes dismissed his disguised visitant. The curtain of the great door had scarce concealed the retreating Camarga, before he heard a footstep behind ; and looking round, he beheld the figure of La Monjonaza steal in from the garden, and cross the apartment.

“What sayest thou *now*, Magdalena?” he cried, striding up to her, and viewing with interest a countenance sternly composed, yet bearing the traces of recent and deep passions. “Thou shouldst have told me of this. —Yet what sayest thou now?”

“Nothing,” replied the maiden, calmly, but with tones deeper than usual,—“Nothing. —Do thy work.”

With these brief and mystic expressions she passed among the secret chambers ; and the Captain-General, stalking into the garden, until the chill breezes from the lake

had cooled his feverish temples, betook himself at last to his couch, to subdue, in slumber, imaginary empires, and contend with visionary foes.

CHAPTER IV.

THE day after the Feast of the Holy Ghost, or Whitsunday, early in May 1521, opened upon the valley of Mexico with clouds and vapours, which, sweeping over the broad lake, collected and lingered with boding fury around the island city, discharging thunder and lightning, while the sunbeams shone clear and uninterrupted over Tezcuco, and the rich savannas which surrounded it. It was the morning of a novel and impressive ceremony. A rivulet, deepened by the labours of many thousand Indians, into a navigable canal, and bordered for the space of half a league on either side,

by narrow meadows, separated the city from another scarce inferior in magnitude, but which yet seemed only a suburb. The whole space thus extending between the two cities, from the lake, as far as the eye could see, was blackened by the bodies of Indian warriors, armed and decorated as if for battle, while the housetops in the cities were equally thronged with multitudes of aged men and women and children. A narrow space was left vacant on each bank of the canal, from which the feathered barbarians, two hundred thousand in number, were separated by the Spanish army, drawn up in extended lines on either bank, the companies of footmen alternating with little squadrons of mounted cavaliers, from whose spears waved bright pennons.

As they stood thus, in gallant array, a flourish of trumpets drew their eyes up the stream, and they could behold over the housetops, winding with the sinuosities of the canal, a line of masts and of sails half let loose to the

breeze, advancing slowly towards the lake, drawn, as it presently appeared, by double rows of natives, gaily apparelled, who occupied the space on the banks left vacant by the military.

As they approached nigh and more nigh, it was seen that each vessel bore no little resemblance to some of those light and open brigantines which have been, from time immemorial, the chosen delights of Mediterranean pirates, and the scourge of the sea from Barbary to the Greek Islands. Each carried twenty-five men, twelve of whom were rowers, the others musketeers, crossbowmen, cannoniers (for a falconet frowned over the prow of each,) and sailors. Besides a multitude of little pennons with which they were covered, two great banners waved over each, the one bearing the royal arms of Spain, the other being the private standard which had been assigned, along with an appropriate name and a solemn benediction, by a priest, at the dock-yard, after

the celebration of the mass of the Holy Ghost ; for with such ceremonies of religion and pomp the fatal galleys were committed, that morning, to their proper element.

One by one they passed into the lake, and ranged in a line before the mouth of the little river, fourteen in number. At this point, the mummeries of celebration were concluded by another and final benediction, pronounced from the shore ; which was succeeded by a combined uproar of artillery, trumpets, and human voices, more loud and tumultuous than any which had yet shaken the borders of Tezcuco.

When the smoke of the cannon had cleared away, the brigantines were seen parting and flitting along in different courses, like a flock of wild-fowl, frightened and separated by the explosion. Their evolutions should be rather likened to the gambols of vultures, escaped from some dreary confinement, and now fluttering their wings in the joy of liberation, and the expectation of prey. Castilian navigators

were at last launched upon the sea of Anahuac, and they seemed resolved at once to confirm their dominion by ploughing through each rolling surge, and penetrating to every bay and creek. As they divided thus, some standing out into the lake, and others darting along the shores, the admiring and shouting spectators began to observe and point out to one another certain pillars of smoke, rising one after the other, from the hills and headlands; by which was conveyed from town to town the intelligence of an event long since expected by the watchful infidels.

Another spectacle, however, soon withdrew the eyes of the lookers-on from these signal fires. From the bank of vapours which still concealed the towers of Tenochtitlan, they beheld an Indian piragua, or gondola, of some magnitude, and no little splendour, come paddling into view, followed by three canoes of much lighter and plainer structure. An awning of brilliant cloths, running from stem to stern,

over the piragua, overshadowed and almost hid the rowers.

It was no sooner perceived from the fleet, than three or four brigantines gave chase, as after an undoubted enemy and legal prize. Still, its voyagers advanced on their course, fearlessly, and to all appearance disregarding of the commands of the captains to heave-to, even although one call was accompanied by a musket-shot, discharged across their bows. Its director undoubtedly confided in his pacific character, indicated, according to the customs of Anahuac, by a little net of gold, mingled with white feathers, tied to the head of a spear, and displayed high above the awning.

"Well done for the dog, Techeechee!" muttered Cortes into the ear of an hidalgo, of stern appearance, mounted like himself, and at his side; "Well done for Techeechee, the Silent Dog! he is worth twenty such hounds as Olinpilli. He has brought me an embassy. By my conscience, it comes over late though, and

I knew not what good can spring of it, at this hour.—These fools of the brigantines are over-officious! 'Tis a confident knave; see, he steers for the palace garden! I must ride thither. Hark thee, De Olid," he continued, still addressing the grim cavalier, but aloud, as if willing that all should hear: "let this thing be despatched: Thou wilt make, at the worst, a just judge. In this trial, it becomes neither my feelings, nor perhaps my honour, that I should myself sit in judgment. The chief Alcaldes will give thee their aid. Judge not in anger, but with justice; bring it not against the young man that he turned his sword upon me.—And yet I see not how thou canst avoid it; nevertheless, if thou canst do so, let it be done. There is enough else to condemn him. His life is in thine hands: be just, and yet be not too rigid. If thou canst, by any justifiable leniency, admit him to mercy, do so. Yes, be merciful, if thou canst—be merciful."

With these instructions, which were proce

nounced not without discomposure, Cortes put spurs to his steed, and rode into the city and to the palace, followed by some half dozen cavaliers.

He had scarcely assumed the state with which he thought fit to overawe the envoys of the different barbaric tribes, whom the fame of his power and greatness was daily bringing to his court, before an officer entered the audience-chamber from the garden, and acquainted him that ambassadors from Tenochtitlan humbly craved to be admitted to his presence.

“Let them be taken round to the front, that the dogs may look upon the artillery,” said the Captain-General; and perhaps added in his thoughts, “that they may creep up to my footstool, taking in my greatness from afar, until their humility dwindles into submissiveness.”

Presently the curtain of the great door was pushed aside, and the Mexicans entered, pre-

ceded and followed by armed men; the old Ottomí being in advance of all. They were twelve in number, the chief or principal being a man of lofty stature and manly years, wholly differing from the orator Olin, for whom Cortes looked in vain among the others. To indicate the high rank of the ambassador, two attendants sustained over his head, on little rods, a gay canopy or penthouse of feathers. His green mantle (for that was the colour worn by an ambassador,) was of the richest material, the border being wrought into scroll-work with little studs of solid gold. His buskins, for such they might be called, were of crimson leather, and a crimson fillet was wound round his hair, which was, otherwise, almost covered with little tufts or tassels of cotton-down of the same hue. Each of these singular decorations was the evidence and distinguishing badge of some valiant exploit in battle; and it was therefore manifest to all in the slightest degree acquainted with the customs of Anahuac, even

at the first sight, that the barbarian was a man of renown among the Mexicans. A cluster of rattling grains of gold, suspended to his nestrils, indicated that he belonged to the order of Teuctli,—a race of nobles inferior only to the *Tlamantli*, or vassal-kings; and the red fillets showed that he was a Prince of the House of Darts, the highest of the several chivalric branches into which this order was divided, the two next appertaining to the House of Eagles and the House of Tigers.—In introducing these barbaric terms, we have no desire to inflict upon the reader a dissertation on Aztec chivalry, but simply to make him aware, that these singular infidels were, in their way, nearly as well provided with the vanities of knight-hood and nobility as some of the European nations in the middle ages.

The general appearance of the ambassador was commanding; his features were bold and harsh, yet manly,—his forehead expanded, though inclined, and furrowed as with the

frowns of battle,—and his eye had a touch of wildness and ferocity, at variance with his modest bearing while advancing towards the Captain-General, and still more strongly contrasted with that melancholy sweetness of mouth, which seems to be a characteristic of all the children of America.—Perhaps it is *fitly* characteristic, since the proclivity of their fate is equally mournful, throughout all the continent. He bore in his hand the gold net and white plume, hanging to a headless spear, which had been displayed and distinguished afar in the piragua,—as well as a golden arrow,—both being the emblems of a Mexican envoy. He was entirely without arms, as were all the rest.

Behind the canopy-bearers came three old men, with tablets of dressed skin, or maguey paper in their hands, known, at once, to be writers, secretaries or annalists,—who accompanied ambassadors, and other high officers, in

expeditions of importance, to record their actions and preserve the proofs of treaties.

After these followed six *Tlamémt*, or common carriers, bearing presents, which, with Mexicans of that day, as with Orientals of this, made no small share of the *matériel* of diplomacy.

As this train was led forward up to the chair of state, Cortes fixed his eye with a smile of approbation on the Ottomí, but did not think fit to honour him with any further evidence of thankfulness. He had other matters to fill his thoughts; for, at the first glance, he recognized in the ambassador a noble, famous even in the days of Montezuma, for skill, audacity, and unconquerable aversion to the strangers, and who, under the ominous title of *Masquazauhtli*,* or the Lord of Death, was known to

*The name is corrupted, as are all those handed down by the earlier historians. The suffixes, *pilli* and *teuctli*,

have commanded bodies of reinforcement, sent to several different shore-towns, to oppose the arms of Cortes in the late campaign. In especial, he was known to have devised the plan of cutting the dikes of Iztapalapan, after decoying the Spaniards into that city, where they escaped drowning almost by a miracle; it was equally certain that he had commanded the multitudes of warriors, who, scarce ten days since, had repulsed the Spaniards from Tacuba, with considerable loss; and he was even supposed to have been present in the sack of Xochimilco, where Cortes had been in such imminent peril. The appearance of this man was doubly disagreeable, as being heartily detested himself, and as showing the temper of Guatimozin's mind, who chose to send an envoy so little inclined to composition. A murmur of dissatisfaction arose

indicate the title, and are therefore not a part of the name. We translate both *lord*; though it would be more germane to the matter, however ludicrous it might seem, to say at once Duke Death, and Earl Oliz.

among the Spaniards present, as soon as they were made aware of the ambassador's character; and if looks could have destroyed, it is certain the Lord of Death would have passed to the world of shades, before speaking a word of his embassy.

Without, however, seeming to regard these boding glances any more than he had done the hostile opposition of the brigantines, he began without delay the usual native forms of salutation. But before he could pass to those rhetorical and reverential flourishes of compliment, which constituted the exordium of an ambassador's speech, he was interrupted by Cortes, whose words were interpreted by the same cavalier who had officiated before, in the interview with Olin.

"Masquaza-teuctli, Lord of Death!" said the Captain-General, sternly, "what dost thou here in Tezcuco!"

The infidel looked up with surprise, and having eyed the Spaniard a moment, replied with

another question, which was only remarkable as indicating the composure of the speaker, and as giving utterance to tones exceedingly soft and pleasant :

“ Was Olin deceived, and did Techeechee lie ? ” he said. “ I bring the words of Guatimozin to Malintzin, son of Quetzalcoatl, and Lord of the Big Canoes, with legs of crocodiles and wings of pelicans.”

“ Art thou not stained with the blood of Castilians ? ” rejoined Cortes, but little pleased with the frank and unawed bearing of the envoy. “ This thing is ill of Guatimozin : why does he send me an enemy from Tenochtitlan ! ”

The Lord of Death replied with what seemed a lurking smile, if such could be traced in a peculiar and slight motion of lips, always sedate, if not always melancholy ;

“ Has the Teuctli a *friend* in Tenochtitlan ?
— Let Malintzin speak his name : I will return.

—My little children are yet awkward with the bow and arrow."

"Hark to the hound!" exclaimed the Captain-General, struck more by the hint conveyed by the last words than by the sarcasm so gently expressed in the first: "He would have me believe the very boys of Mexico are training to resist us! and that he thinks it better honour to encourage the young cubs to malice, than to speak to me for terms of peace.—Hearken, infidel: you spoke of the young man Olin. Why returned not he to Tezcucó?"

"Malintzin was in a hurry for the blood of Iztapalapan: the king saw the glitter of spears on the lake side, and said to his servant, 'Go not to Tezcucó with gold and sweet words, but to Iztapalapan with axes and spears.'—"

"Ay, marry; but Olin, what of Olin-pilli?—I warrant me, the knavish king discovered the craft of the knavish noble, and so killed him?—I was a fool to give him the beads.—"

What sayest thou, infidel! what has become of the Speaker of Wise Things? I sent him to Guatimozin for an envoy; and, lo you, this old savage, the silent Dog, has brought me what Olin could not, nor did not. Is Olin living?"

"How shall I answer? *Ipalnemōani** is the maker of life; it is the king who takes it. Olin-pilli is forgotten."

"Ay then, let him sleep; and to thy work, infidel, to thy work. Will Guatimozin have peace? He is somewhat late of decision; but the great monarch of Spain, who sends me to speak with him, and to enforce the vassalage acknowledged by Montezuma, is merciful. Speak, then, and quickly. My ships are on the lake, my soldiers are thicker than the reeds on its banks, and fiercer than its waters, when

* One of the titles of the Supreme God, (*Teotl*), who was not worshipped directly, but through the medium of his agents, the inferior divinities.

the torrents rush down from the mountains. Will he have the blood of his people flow through the streets, as the waters of an inundation, when the dikes are broken? Speak then, Lord of Death; will Guatimozin acknowledge himself the king's vassal, pay tribute, and govern his empire in peace?"

"Hear the words of Guatimozin," said the ambassador, beckoning to the Tlamémé to open their packs: "The king sends you the history of his land,"—taking up, from among many books, which made the contents of the first bundle, a volume of hieroglyphics, and displaying its pictured pages: "He has searched for the time when the king of Castile was the lord of his people; but it is not written. How then shall he kiss the earth before the Teuctli? He has sought to find to what race, besides the race of heaven, the men of Mexico have paid tribute: It is not written,—except this,—that once, when his fathers were poor and few, the men of Cojohuacan called on them for tribute,

and they paid it in the skulls of their foes. The men of Castile call for tribute: Guatimozin sends them such tribute as his fathers paid; here it is—twelve skulls of the dogs of Chalco taken in the act of rebellion.” And as he spoke, the grinning orbs rolled under his foot against the platform.

“Hah!” cried Cortes, starting up, with as much admiration as wrath, for he was keenly alive to every burst of audacious and heroic daring, “is not this a merlin of a royal stock, that will try buffets with an eagle! But, pho! the young man is besotted.”

“Hear, further, the words of Guatimozin,” continued the envoy, taking from the third bundle two more books, and displaying them as he had done the first: “the king remembers that the wild Ottomies came down from their hills, saying that they were foolish and pitiful, because Ipalnemoani had kept them in darkness, so that they robbed one another, and were blasphemers against heaven. The king

gave them religion and laws ; and, behold, those that live upon the skirts of the valley, are become wise and happy. The king says, ' Have not the Spaniards come like the Ottomies ? and are they not very ignorant and miserable ? ' These are the king's words to Malintzin : ' Take this book, and learn how to worship the gods : religion is a good thing, and will make you happy. Take this book also, and understand the laws of men : justice is a good thing, and will make you happy. '

It would be difficult to express the varied feelings of wonder, anger, scorn, and merriment, with which the Spaniards hearkened to this extraordinary exhortation. Some stared, some frowned, some smiled, and a few laughed outright ; but all immediately betook themselves to looks of sympathetic anger, when Cortes, again rising, stamped upon the platform, crying with a fierceness that was in part unassumed.

" Knave of a heathen and savage, dost thou

pass this scorn upon the religion of Christ? this slight upon the laws of Castile? this slur upon religious and civilized men? Look upon this cross, and say to Guatimozin, that not a Spaniard shall leave his valley till every slave, that acknowledges his sway, has knelt before it, and abjuring the fiendish idolatry of Mexitli, has sworn with a kiss, to worship naught else. Look, too, upon this sword, and say to thine insolent prince, that it shall not cease to strike and slay, until his whole people have acknowledged it to be the abrogator of the old, and the teacher of a new law, such as his brutish sages never dreamed of. In one word, give him to know, that my purpose in his land, is to bestow upon it the cross of heaven and the laws of Spain; and these I will bestow,—both,¹—so help me the sword which I grasp, and the cross that I worship!”

A murmur of satisfaction and responsive resolution passed through the assemblage, which had been considerably increased by the appear-

ance of such officers, returning from the lakeside, as were privileged to enter the presence on such an occasion. But the stern voice of the Captain-General produced no effect on the Mexicans, except, indeed, that one of the three writers who had been all the time busily engaged, as they squatted upon the floor, recording the speeches, in their inexplicable manner, raised his eyes when the Christian's voice was at the highest, and eyed him askant for a minute or two. The Lord of Death kept his glance firmly fixed on the aspect of the general, while listening to the interpretation of his angry vows. Then, when Cortes had concluded, he turned to the fourth pack, and resumed his discourse, as if it were no part of his duty to reply to anything not immediately touching his instructions.

"Hear, further, the words of Guatimozin," he said, pointing to an ear of maize, a bundle of cacaoberries, a cluster of bananas, and divers other fruits, as well as nuts and esculent roots,

which appeared in the pack: "Thus says the king of Mexico:—Is Castile a naked rock, where the food of man grows not? Malintzin said to Montezuma, 'The land is like other lands, with earth over the flint-stone, and with rivers to make it fertile; soil comes down from the mountains, and heaven sends frequent rains.' Look at Mexico: the sun parches it, till it becomes like sand, half the year; the other half, the sky turns to water, and drowns the gardens and corn-fields. But is man a dog, that he should howl when he is hungry, and run abroad for food? God gave these good things to the king; the king gives them to the Spaniard. Let him throw them upon the earth, and sit hard by in patience, while the rain drops upon them; and, by and by, he will have food for himself and his children: he will not be hungry, and run forth, like a dog, to strange lands, seeking for food.—Hear, further, the words of the king," continued the brave barbarian, observing the impatience of Cortes, and

Cortes cast his eye upon the paper, and beheld, besides the date, a preamble of two lines, and the signatures of the judges, the following brief and pithy sentences :

“ Concealing a spy and fugitive from justice
—Guilty.

“ Drawing sword upon a Christian—Guilty.

“ Resisting with arms an officer in the execution of his duty—Guilty.

“ Sentence—To be beheaded, his right hand struck off and nailed to the prison-door.—To take effect in half an hour.

“ In the name of God and the king.

“ DE OLID,

“ MARIN,

“ DE IRCIO.”

“ Butchers !” cried Cortes, with accents of unspeakable horror. “ What ho, a pen ! a pen, knave ! a pen !”

The agitation and violence of his voice sur-

prised even the stoical Mexicans; and the writers looking up, he became suddenly aware that the implements with which they practised their rude art, would answer all his purpose. Darting forward, he snatched from the hand of the nearest one of the many reeds which he held. The barbarian, although apparently the oldest and most infirm of the three, mistaking the purpose of the assault, started to his feet with a vivacity of effort which, at any other moment, would have drawn a sharp look of suspicion from the Captain-General. But his thoughts were too much excited to be diverted by any such seeming inconsistency.

It happened, by a natural accident, (for each reed was appropriated to its peculiar colour,) that that which Cortes had seized contained a dark crimson ink. Still, natural as the circumstance was, it had no sooner touched the paper than he shuddered, and muttering "Blood! blood!" seemed as if he would have cast it away. But recovering himself in an instant,

with a faint and forced laugh, he subscribed the few words,

"Confirmed.—Respite for twenty-four hours.

"CORTES."

and putting the paper into Villafana's hands, he dismissed him with the hurried charge,

"Away—see to it."

He then flung the reed back to the writer who had already resumed his squatting attitude, and reascended the platform.

On those who surmised the cause of this sudden interruption, the agitation of Don Hernan had the good effect of banishing from their minds any lingering suspicions of his entertaining personal ill-will towards the unfortunate Lerma. All went to show that he was shocked at the young man's fate, and the necessity of ministering to it, even in the simple act of confirming a judgment, awarded by others; but, unhappily, the same feeling that exonerated the judge, still further increased the odium

attached to the criminal. How great, they thought, must be the guilt of him whom it causes Cortes so much suffering to condemn.—But the Captain-General, recovering himself, gave them little time for such speculations.

“Well, infidel, thou speakest well,” he cried, his voice becoming firmer with each syllable; “What hidest thou in the sixth bundle?—or rather, what if I should accept thy master’s niggardly offer, and depart with these baubles for women and children, as thou hast rightly called them?”

“Hear the words of Guatimozin,” replied the ambassador, with a careless emphasis, as if properly understanding the futility of the proposal, and, indeed, with a look of scorn, as if learning to despise one capable of Don Hernan’s late weakness: “If Malintzin depart with the fifth pack, cast the sixth into the lake, and tell him, that, in its place, he shall have sent after him to the seaside, a thousand sacks of robes and four thousand sacks of corn, to

clothe and feed his people as they sail over the endless sea. Say to him besides—”

“Pho,” interrupted Cortes, “have done with this mummary, and get thee to the sixth sack, which I am impatient to examine. What hast thou there?”

“The riches which are more precious to Mexico than the trinkets of her children,” replied the stately barbarian; and, as he spoke, he rolled upon the floor, arrowheads and spear-points of bright copper, sharp blades of itztl and heavy maces of flint, which made up the contents of the last bundle: “Hear the words of Guatimozin,” he continued, with a dignity of bearing that might have become a Spartan envoy in the camp of the Persian; “thus says the king: ‘What is the Lord of Castile, that Guatimozin should call him master? what is Malintzin, that Guatimozin should make him his friend? The Teuctli burns my cities, murders my children, and spits in the face of my gods. His religion is murder, his law robbery.’”

he is strong, yet very unjust ; he is wise, yet he makes men mad. Guatimozin has called together the chiefs and the planters of corn, the wise men and the foolish, the strong and the feeble, the old men, the women and the children. He has spoken to them, and they have replied : ‘Is not the sword better than the whip ? is not the arrow softer than the brand ? is not the fagot of fire pleasanter than the chain of captivity ? is not death sweeter than slavery ?’ Thus says the old man,— ‘I am old ; wherefore, then, should I be a slave for a day ?’ Thus says the little infant,— ‘I am a little child ; why should I be a slave for many years ?’ This, then, is the word of the whole people ; it is Guatimozin who speaks it ; ‘If the gods desert me, what have I to yield but life ? if they help me, as they have helped my fathers, what have I do to, but to drive away my foe ? Let Malintzin look at my weapons, and put two plates of the black copper of Castile on his bosom, for I am very

strong in my sorrow, and I will strike very hard. Let Malintzin fear: the rebels of Tezcuco and Cholula, the traitors of Chalco and Otumba, are but straws to help him: can they look in the face of a Mexican? Let Malintzin fear: is he stronger than when he fled from Tenochtitlan, in the month of Mourning? * has not Mexico more fighting men than when the horn of the gods sounded at midnight, and the Teactli sat on the stone and wept?—on the stone of Tacuba, by the water-side, when the morning came, and his people slept in the ditches? If Malintzin will fight, so will Guatimozin. These are the words of the king; these are the words of the people: they are said. The gods behold us."

So spake the bold savage; and as if to show that even the basest and feeblest shared his courage, and sanctioned his defiance, the

* Embracing a portion respectively of June and July, and devoted to austere and penitential preparation for a coming festival.

very Tlamémé looked around them with a show of spirit, and the three old men expressed their satisfaction with audible murmurs.

The Spaniards were surprised at the fearless tones of the Lord of Death, and not a few were impressed with alarm as well as anger, when he referred so unceremoniously to the events of the fatal Noche Triste. As for Cortes himself, though the frown with which he listened to the whole oration, had become darker and darker as the warrior-noble proceeded, yet, apparently, he had become sensible, both from the tenor of the discourse and the resolute bearing of the speaker, that it should be answered with gravity rather than anger. Hence, when he came to reply, it was in terms briefly impressive and solemn :

“ My young brother Guatimozin is unwise, and he is digging the grave of his whole people. He has evil counsellors about him. I have somewhat to say to him ; and, to-mor-

row you shall be sent back with an answer, which will perhaps dispel his foolish dream of resistance."—He observed that the Lord of Death looked displeased and even alarmed, when the interpreter made him sensible that he was to be detained until the morrow. "Be not alarmed," he continued, sternly: "when didst thou ever hear of a Christian aping the treachery of thy native princes, and doing wrong to an ambassador? I tell thee, fellow, infidel though thou be, I will do thee honour, in respect of thy young master. To-morrow thou shalt eat at my board, for it is a day of banqueting; and to-morrow, also, shalt thou be made acquainted with my answer to the king's message, which it is not possible I should speak to-day. Rest you then content.—Hark thee, Villafana," (for the Alguazil had returned,) "have thou charge of this bitter-tongued knave and his dumb companions. Entreat them well, but see that they neither escape nor communicate with any one in this

any, Christian or misbeliever. And look well to thy prison too.—This knave, Techechee,—bring him to me when thou changest guards at the prison.”

Then, breaking up the audience, he remained for a time in conference with a few of the chief officers, debating subjects of great importance, but which would be of no interest to the readers of this history.

CHAPTER V.

SOME two hours after nightfall, as the unhappy Lerma lay in darkness and solitude; (for Befe was no longer permitted to be his companion,) the door of the prison opened, and the Alguazil, Villafana, entered, bearing a lantern, which emitted just sufficient light to allow his features to be distinguished, together with what seemed a flask of wine—a luxury now to be occasionally obtained, since vessels arrived not unfrequently from the islands.

“How now, what cheer, señor?” he exclaimed, setting down the flask upon the table; and turning the light full upon Juan’s face;

“are you saying your prayers? Here’s that shall give you better comfort,—something from the vineyards of Xeres de la Frontera,—stout Sherry, that shall make your heart bounce, were it broken twice over.—Come, faith, it will make you merry.”

“I shall never be merry more,” said Juan; “and why should I? It is better I should not. I thank you for your good-will, Villafana; but I would that, instead of this wine, if it be not contrary to your duty, you would fetch me the good father Olmedo, to finish the confession begun upon the block, and so abruptly interrupted this morning.”

“Pho, be not in such a hurry: you have time enough. The priest is busy, and knowing he must shrive you to-morrow, he will be ill inclined to trouble himself superfluously to-night. Come, sit up, drink, laugh, and curse thy foes. Come, now,—a merry God’s blessing!—may you live a thousand years!—

Dzoog ! bah ! dzoog !—Now could I fight seven tigers !”

“ It is better thou shouldst drink it than I,” said Juan, observing the strong and somewhat fantastic gestures with which the Alguazil expressed his approbation, after having taken a hearty draught of the liquor ; “ yet bethink thee, Villafana,—”

“ Slid ! ” interrupted the gaoler, “ bethink thyself ! and bethink thee that this will make thee a good fellow of a warhorse mettle, whereas, now, thou art but a sick lambkin. What makes a beggar a king, hah ? a tailor’s ’prentice a Cid Ruy Diaz of Castile,—a doughty Campeador ? Pho, there is more of this, and to-morrow it will flow. Dost thou not know, Don Demonios, our king, has invited us to a banquet to-morrow ? Thou shalt hear this banquet spoken of for a thousand years. Ah, the good ship ! the good ship ! there is a better thing she brings us than wine.—But

that is neither here nor there. Why dost thou not drink?"

"Am I not condemned to death for the infraction of a decree?" said Juan, somewhat sternly, for he thought he perceived in Villafana's levity a symptom of undue excitement; "and dost thou not remember that there is a decree also against drunkenness? Thou hast suffered somewhat from this already."

"Dost thou suppose there is a hell?" said Villafana, with some such look as that which had appalled Juan, when he walked with him over the meadows beyond the city: "For, if thou dost, know then, that I make my promise to the infernal fiend, to broil with him seven times seven thousand years, if I do not, with a stab for every lash, make up my reckoning with the man who degraded me! *Ojala* and Amen!—So now, there's enough to keep thee quiet.—Hast thou any gall any where but in thy liver?"

"Thou art besotted, or insane, I think,"

said Juan, angrily. "I am a dying man: begone, and suffer me to make my peace with heaven."

"Come you think I am drunk," said Villafana, somewhat more rationally: "I grant you; but it is with a stuff stronger than strong drink!—ay, faith, for, to-morrow, I see my way to heaven!—Answer me truly: have you no thirst for vengeance on those who have brought you to this pass?—You see I am sober, hah? One would not die like a sheep.—You may play the wolf yet. What if you had an opportunity—"

"Tempt me not, knave," said Juan, turning away his face—"Avoid thee, Satan!"

"What if I should knock open thy doors, and put a sword into thy hand?" said Villafana, bending over, so as to whisper into his ear; "what wouldst thou do with it?"

"Break it," replied the prisoner, wrapping his mantle about his head, as if to shut out all further temptation.

"Thou art a fool," said the Alguazil, with a growl, and left the apartment.

Juan heard his retreating steps, followed by the clanking of the chain, which, with a strong padlock on the outside, secured the door of the prison; yet he neither raised his head, nor removed the mantle from his face, but endeavoured to drive from his heart the thoughts of passion, excited by the words of the tempter. From this gloomy task he was roused by a soft voice, murmuring, as it seemed to him from the air, for he was not aware of the presence of any human being in the apartment,—

"Does the Great Eagle fear the face of his friend?"

He started to his feet, and beheld in the light of the lantern, which Villafana had left on the table, the figure of an ancient Indian, standing hard by.

"Teecheechee!" he exclaimed—"But no; thy

speech is pure, thy tongue is another's. Who art thou, grey-head of Mexico !"

"To-day, Cojotl, the cunning fox of scribes, —yesterday, Olin, the tongue of nobles,—but before, and hereafter, Guatimozin, the friend of the Great Eagle," replied the Indian, and as he spoke, he exchanged the decrepit stoop of age for the lofty demeanour of youth, and parted the gray locks which had hitherto almost concealed his countenance.

"Rash prince!" said Juan, will you yet wear the chains of Montezuma? Why dost thou again entrust thyself among Spaniards?"

"How came the Great Eagle into the place of Guatimozin?" demanded the young Mexican, expressively: "Shall he die for Guatimozin, and Guatimozin stand afar off?"

"Alas, prince," said Juan, "thy friendship is noble, but can do me no good. Leave this place, where thou art in great danger, and think of me no more. I am beyond the reach of help. Think

of thyself,—of thy people, (for, surely, it is thy duty to protect them) and depart while thou canst.”

“And what am I, that I should do this thing?” said Guatimozin. “Listen to me, son of the dayspring: the children of Spain are wolves and reptiles; the iztli is sharp for them, and it must not spare. But thou, the young Eagle, shalt remain the friend of Guatimozin. Has not Malintzin eaten of thy blood? is he not like the big tiger that takes by the throat? and who shall draw him away? Canst thou remain, and smile on another sunset? I bring thee liberty.”

“How!” said Juan; “is Villafana this traitor, that he will permit me to escape?”

“He is a rat with two faces,” said the prince, significantly; “he fears the wrath of Malintzin; he loves gold, but he says thou shalt not go till to-morrow, and to-morrow thou wilt be in Mictlan, the world of caves. But Guatimozin can do what the traitor Christian

will not. The Eagle is very brave: he shall kill his foe."

As Guatimozin spoke, he drew from his cloak a Spanish dagger, long, sharp, and exceedingly bright,—a relic of the spoils won from the invaders in the Night of Sorrow,—and offered it to the prisoner, adding,

"When I depart, a soldier will fasten the door. If thou art strong-hearted, thou canst rush by, dealing him a blow. At the waters edge, by the broken wall, thou wilt find a friend with a canoe; it is Techeechee. Is not Tenochtitlan hard by? Guatimozin, the king of Mexico, will make his friend welcome."

"Prince," said Juan, sadly, "this thing cannot be. Why should I strike down the poor sentinel? He has done me no wrong. What would become of thee? Thou couldst not escape. What would become of Villafana, who, knave though he be, has yet done much to serve me? And what, to conclude, would become of *me*, escaping from Christians, to take

refuge among thy unbelieving people). I can die, prince, but I can be neither renegade nor apostate."

"Is there nothing in Tenochtitlan that dwells in the thoughts of the captive? I will be very good to thee; and thou shalt drink the blood of thy foe."

"Prince," said Juan, firmly, "thine eye cannot search the soul of a Christian. Malintzin has done me a great wrong, yet would I not harm a hair of his head: no, heaven is my witness! I can forgive him even my death, however unjust and cruel."

"It is a dove of Cholula that speaks in the voice of my friend," said the infidel, struck with as much disdain as surprise at the want of spirit, which his barbarous code of honour discovered in a lack of vindictiveness: "Is a man a worm that he should be trampled on?"

"No," said Juan, bitterly—for he could not

resist his feelings of indignation, when he suffered himself to consider his degradation in this light. "Had I resisted him in his first anger, had I resented his first injustice, had I provoked him by any complaint, then might I think of his course with submission. But I have not; I have been, indeed, as thou sayest, a worm, at all times helpless, at all times unresisting. Others have complained, some have defied him, but they passed unpunished. I, who have yielded, like a woman, escape not: I creep from the path of his anger, but his foot follows me,—turn which way I will, it crushes me. Even Bepo will show his teeth sometimes—I have seen him growl when Cortes struck him — and by mine honour, I think he struck him, because he was once mine!"

How far, by indulging such thoughts, he might have wrought himself into the very spirit which Guatimozin was surprised to find absent,

we will not venture to say. He was interrupted by the sudden re-entrance of Villafana, who immediately exclaimed,

“Will you have my brother Najara diving in upon you? Pho, you talk too loud: ’tis well you were gabbling in Mexican. Hark ye, Olin, you knave, get you gone! to your den, sirrah! —Pray, señor Juan, tell this rascal, in his own gibberish, that he cannot remain a moment longer from his lock-up, without being discovered.—Come, fellow, come: you shall have more talk to-morrow.”

So saying, the Alguazil conducted the Mexican away. A few moments after, he returned alone. Juan, still disordered and brooding over his wrongs, paced to and fro over the narrow limits of his cell. His agitation increased with each step, and, at last, finding that Villafana did not speak, he exclaimed,

“Come, Villafana,—I know what thou wilt say,—am I not used dog-like? He disdained even to sit upon the trial, to ask me what I had

to urge in excuse of my folly ; but left this to judges, who were content to ask ‘ Didst thou this ? ’ and ‘ Didst thou that ? ’ without permitting me a word of defence. Surely, I had much provocation in the matter of Guzman ; and, as for the decree, it should have been remembered, that I was come into the camp too short a time to have made it as fast in my mind as others, who had heard it daily proclaimed for months. I must die for this !—die like a hunted assassin !—my hand stuck against the prison-door ; my body given, perhaps, to fatten the lean hogs that will fatten my judges ! Oh, by heaven, this is intolerable to think on ! ”

“ Thou wilt believe, now, that thou wert sent to the South Sea for no good ? ”

“ Ay, I will believe anything, ” said Juan, in increasing excitement. “ And this too ! scarce an hour returned from my sufferings, endured for him,—endured to regain his good-will ! Ay, and before I had done speaking, he would have sent me to Mexico, to be sacrificed there !—

before I had eaten and drunk ! before I had rested my wearied body, before I had recruited my exhausted strength !—Tell me, Villafana ! was it not by his design I was entrapped into giving shelter to—But, no ! that could not be ; in that, at least, he must be innocent. But, in the rest, it is oppression, grinding, intolerable oppression !”

“ Well, I marvel he did not let thee off with a scourging,” said Villafana, swallowing another draught from the neglected flask. “ Come, drink, and we will discourse together.”

“ A scourging !” said Juan, seizing the Alguazil’s arm with a grasp which showed that imprisonment and sorrow had not altogether robbed him of strength ; “ dare you talk to me of scourging ?”

“ Ay, marry,” said Villafana, whose object seemed to be to excite the slumbering fury of the young man, and who now, in the effect of a word used for another purpose, discovered a point

on which his equanimity was not impregnable ;
“ ay, faith ; for the whole army cries out upon
his barbarity, saying that he is murdering
you ; so that he already talks of letting you off
with a scourging.—He was as good with
me.”

“ By the saints of heaven !” cried Juan,
snatching up the dagger which Guatimozin had
left, and striking it into the table with a fury
which split the plank in twain, “ were it his
own, I would drive this steel into the breast of
the man that designed me to such dishonour.
Scourge me ! Thanks be to heaven, that sends
this weapon !”

“ Oho, señor !” said Villafana, with counter-
feited indignation, “ you will resist, will you ?
Hah ! and you have a dagger too ! Come, señor,
give it up.”

“ Fool,” said the prisoner, “ thy bitter words
have unchained me at last, and driven me to
desperation. I will not yield this weapon but

with my life. Wo betide him that comes to me with a scourge, were it Don Hernan himself!"

"You will resist him then?—Why now you are a man again! Sit down; fear not: you shall have a better weapon. Come, let us drink a little: 'tis a raw night, and rainy. Here's success to our vengeance—a quart of blood apiece! Methinks, you are more wronged than myself—Therefore, you shall strike the first blow. I give you this privilege, out of friendship. The second is mine."

While Villafana held forth in these extraordinary terms, Juan, shocked into composure, became aware that the wine, which the Alguazil plied with characteristic infatuation, had already made serious inroads upon his brain. He ogled and smiled, with a stupid contortion of countenance, which was meant to be significant; his articulation was impeded, and his expressions coarser than usual; and without being positively drunk, he was reduced to that

condition in which the natural propensities get the better of all artificial qualities. Hence, he became fierce and bloody-minded, without displaying any of the subtle cautiousness and cunning inquisitiveness, that were common to him in his sober hours. It was for this reason that he proceeded to unfold the secrets of his breast, without being in any degree abashed by the looks of horror, with which Juan heard him.

“ Know then, brother Juan,” said he, “ that thou shalt lap the blood of Don Demonios to-morrow morning, at the banquet-table; and afterwards hang up Guzman with thine own hands. Thou art too white-livered, or thou shouldst have known of the matter earlier. Also, thou shalt have thy fair nun again, as before :—that is, upon condition she likes thee better than me; which may be, or may not, for who can tell whether the star will shoot into the marsh, or fall upon the mountain? Bah! it is a pity I brought thee not another

flagon. Basta! I will drink no more; for this is no time to be thick-witted.—Now then, *Juanito querido*, we have brought our conspiracy to a head; and out of the nine hundred Christians in this town there are two hundred and forty sworn on dirk, buckler, and crucifix, to our whole game,—three hundred who will wink and stand by till the play is over,—three hundred who will swear faith to the devil himself, when Don Demonios lies hid in his pocket, and as for the rest, why we must e'en have some hanging and stabbing."

"In heaven's name," said Juan, "what dost thou mean? Art thou really mad? Bethink thee what thou art saying!"

"Ha!" cried Villafana, "wilt thou skulk backwards, after all? Dost thou pretend to oppose us? We had some thoughts of making thee one of the three chief captains. This Olea stands to; for he swears thou art the best leader in the camp."

"Is Gaspar sworn among you?" said Juan,

with a faint voice, his detestation of the bloody scheme arousing him to the necessity of sifting it to the bottom—for he forgot his captivity, and thought only of arresting the progress of a treason so fearful.

“Ay,” returned the Alguazil; “and better men than he. Come, clap thy name to the paper, and I swear thou shalt have a command among us, though I should kill thy rival-candidate Gil Gonzales, with my own hand. Dost thou not know these fellows? We have hidalgos among us.”

As he spoke, he pulled from his bosom a paper, on which Juan read with affright the names of several men of rank, mingled with those of common soldiers, with many of which he was familiar. His first thought was to secure this dreadful list, and calling to the guards about the prison, arrest the Alguazil upon the spot. A moment's consideration determined him to take further advantage of the communicativeness of the traitor, until

made acquainted with all the details of the conspiracy. He bridled his anger, therefore, and concealing his horror under an appearance of doubt and hesitation, to which his trembling agitation gave no little force, he said,

"How is this? Are these names good and true?"—

"See you not Barba Roxa's sign-manual, near the bottom of the list? He subscribed it last night. He draws the figure of a knife well, as one who knows how to use it. But as for thee, *nino mio*, thou art able to write thy signature in full."

"Stay," cried Juan. "What are you to do? You spoke of a banquet, and the morning. Assassination, hah?"

"Did I not tell thee before? Look," said the Alguazil, with a harsh laugh, displaying a letter, well secured with wax and fillet, on which was written the name of the Captain-General. "Know, that this letter, written carefully on the outside, by mine

own hand, (for there is nothing within), comes from the señor's sire, old Don Martin, whom the devil take to his rest, for fathering so ill-tempered a son. This letter, thou must know," he went on with a chuckle of self-approving craft, "came in the ship of Seville that brought this good wine, and was, by an evil accident, detained on the way. Know, sirrah, and this is my device: The general hath forgotten to invite me to his feast to-morrow, in honour of his saint-day, or some other thing—*Quien sabe?* It is very rude. But he has invited all my caballeros on this paper, and some four score soldiers, who are down likewise. The rest will take their ease in the vestibule, and on the square to be ready. What do I then? Marry, this: I break in upon the revel with the letter in my hand, and a dagger in my sleeve: the others crowd round with congratulations, and I strike him under the ribs—Pho! I forgot; thou canst not have the *first* blow, as I

promised thee; but thou shalt follow, cloaked up to the eyes, and be free to take the second. —What dost thou think of my plot, hah, dear devil! Hah!"

"That it is the most damnable and dastardly ever devised by villain, and shall bring thee to a villain's death. Rogue! didst thou think thou couldst tell this to *me*, and live? I have thy treason in my hand, and will use it as it becomes an honourable man and Christian. What ho, guards! treason, treason!"

Greatly astonished as Villafana was by this unexpected defection, the shock served rather to sober than affright him. He gave the prisoner a look of unspeakable malice, and whipping out his sword and calling for help as clamorously as Juan, he assaulted him with the utmost fury. At the same time, five or six of the guardsmen rushed in, and to Juan's utter dismay, instead of aiding to secure the Alguazil, rushed upon him, some with their

spears, to transfix him against the wall, while others, springing behind him, secured him in their arms, and hurled him upon the floor. In an instant, he had lost both the fatal list and the dagger of Guatimozin, and was at the mercy of Villafana, who knelt upon his breast, and shortened his sword, to despatch him with a thrust. But at the very moment when he had given up all hope, and was commending his soul to his Maker, the savage and exulting laugh with which the Alguazil aimed at his throat, was changed to an exclamation of alarm and pain. Up started the assassin, and Juan, springing also to his feet, he beheld, with surprise, the figure of La Monjonaza standing betwixt him and the assailants. The gray mantle had fallen from her head and shoulders, revealing a form of the finest symmetry, and a countenance convulsed into beauty, such as might have become a warring Bellona; to whom she might have been well compared, only

that in place of the whip and torch which a moralizing mythology has put into the hands of the goddess, she held an emblem equally expressive, in a short dagger, gleaming with blood from the shoulder of Villafana.

"Villain!" she cried, after looking as if she would have repeated the blow, "art thou not yet requited? Begone!"

And the discomfited traitor, scowling and pointing at the blood trickling from his arm, and yet obviously quailing before her stern frown, left the prison, followed by the guards, who seemed even more terrified than himself,

CHAPTER VI.

JUAN stood, for a moment, confounded in the presence of his preserver; and Magdalena, gradually exchanging her fierce expression for one more becoming her sex, appeared at last, as he had seen her before, pale, saddened, and subdued. As she sank into this softened temper, her eye fell upon the crimsoned blade; and it was curious to see with what feminine horror, disgust, and shame, she cast it from her, and to contrast this display of undissembled feelings with her late Amazonian bearing and act.

"Magdalena," said Juan, a thousand emotions at once contending in his bosom, "you have saved my life. Haste now and protect that of Cortes: for, be it dear to thee or not, yet it is not fitting he should be left to the knife of an assassin. Acquaint him from me—nay bear it not from me; for I will not seem as if I sought to purchase my life with the confession—acquaint him that a dreadful conspiracy, headed by the knave Villafana, is about to burst upon his head. If he seize not the traitor to-night, let him beware who approaches the banquet to-morrow. Above all, let him be on his guard against any one who affects to bring letters from his father. Haste, maiden, haste! for perhaps Villafana, wrought upon by his fears, may discharge his train of horrors this very night."

"Dost thou thus seek to preserve him who has so basely compassed thine own life?" said Magdalena, less with surprise than

sorrowing admiration. "Think not of Cortes, but of thyself: thou hast not many hours for thought."

"Alas, Magdalena," said Juan impatiently, "you do not believe me. I swear to you, that what I say is true: Villafana is a traitor, and is now on the point of assassinating the Captain-General."

"If he were about assassinating thee, and the Captain-General knew it, what aid wouldst thou expect from the Captain-General?" rejoined La Monjonaza.

"Maiden!" said Juan, frowning severely, "in this coldness of purpose, now that thou art acquainted with the act, thou art conspiring at murder!"

Apparently this reproof touched Magdalena to the quick. She started, shuddered, and turned as if to leave the prison; but changing her purpose, stepping up to the light, and assuming a boldness which she did not feel, she falteringly asked,

"Is there no case in which such connivance might be excusable? But a moment since," (and here she bent her head upon her bosom,) "I was about to *commit* murder—Had I slain Villafana, wouldst thou then have thought the act criminal?"

"Surely not, surely not," said Juan; "for in this case thou wert arresting the blow of a cut-throat, to kill whom in the act, were but sheer justice, and according to law. And yet I would that the blow had been struck by another. It is not seemly for a woman to carry a dagger, and still more improper that she should use it."

"What if she be attacked by a villain and no helper nigh?" demanded the forlorn girl. "Heaven has given me no protector, —My father, my brother, and my friend—they all lie in this little steel;" and as she picked up the weapon from the floor, as if no longer ashamed to bear it, a ghastly smile beamed from her visage, like the flash

of a Medusa amid the foam of a midnight billow."

"Speak no more of Cortes," she continued, observing that Juan was about to resume the subject of the conspiracy; "he is far better able to protect himself than thou. Were there twenty poniards in Villafana's hand, and were his arm as extended as his malice, yet could he not reach even to the heel of Don Hernan. His fate is written,—yes, more inevitably than thine; for thou hast yet one hope of deliverance, and Villafana has none.—Listen to me, Juan Lerma; it is perhaps the last time on earth that I shall speak to thee. If thou reject mine offer this night, I call heaven to witness that I will leave thee to thy fate."

"Magdalena," said Juan firmly, "we have spoken of this before. God protect thee; for there is a wall of adamant between us."

"Be it so," said the lady; "and let it;

be higher than thy wishes, deeper than thy scorn, so thou wilt leave this land and return to it no more."

"On the morrow, Magdalena, I die," said Lerma, with unabated resolution. "Hear then the counsel of a dying man, who can yet call himself your friend. Do what you have recommended to me: leave this land, and, in the gloom of a cloister, expiate."

"Yet again?" exclaimed the maiden, with an eye of fire. "This is to distract me! Oh! if thou knew how unjustly thou hast planted daggers in my bosom—daggers to which this thing of steel is but as the thorn of a rosebud—thou wouldst kill thyself rather than speak them again! But it matters not: whether thou livest or diest, still must thou know that I am wronged—Listen to me—I will speak of Hilario—"

"Let it not be so," said Juan; and then solemnly added, "Learn that, yesternight the wretched Villafana, who by some ma-

gical science, seems acquainted with the secrets of all in this camp, gave me to know what I did not before dream. Magdalena when I plucked thee from the wreck, I dreamed for a moment that I loved thee." —The maiden trembled from head to foot, and Juan was himself greatly agitated; "I beheld one in whom, from the act of giving her a life, I might fancy a tie such as did not exist between me and any other human being, from the time of the death of my poor father up to that happy hour. But had that affection ripened even into such as Hilario avowed," (Here Magdalena waved her hand impatiently;) "nay, had I plighted with thee faith and troth, and did we stand this moment before the altar, my passion would be at once changed to awe and horror to know that I was wedding the spouse of Heaven. Magdalena, a life of penitence can scarcely remove the sin of broken vows!"

"Say not this," exclaimed the unhappy Magdalena, vehemently: "What knew I of earth or heaven when, imprisoned in a cell from childhood upwards, I gave up the one for the other? Heaven broke the oath which oppressors exacted; else, wherefore was I saved of all the sisters, and thrown upon a land where cloisters were unknown? For these vows could I have procured a dispensation. Hast thou never heard of such being dissolved?"

"Surely I have," said Juan, mildly, desiring to allay the agitation of his visiter: "It was told to me by Villafana, that the señor Camarga, (an insane man, who made an attempt on my life,) was once a monk of St. Dominic and an Inquisitor, and permitted to revoke his vows for some worldly purpose, I know not what; and I have heard it also said, that the sister of Don Hernan was allowed to leave a nunnery

to wed some great nobleman of Andalusia."

"It is enough," said Magdalena, calmly, "the vow was suspended, not broken; it will be resumed, when the purpose for which I now live is accomplished, and would have been before, but for the accident which brought me to this land.—Juan Lerma, I will not ask thee why thou refusest life at my hands: but it is offered thee by one wronged and defamed, not degraded. If thou live, it is well thou shouldst know the truth, and remember me without contempt; if thou die, the grave shall not cover thee in ignorance. Hilario—start not; frown not, tremble not, for the truth must be spoken—Hilario abused thy belief, that he might break my heart, and perhaps, also thine; for he hated me, because I repelled his love with contempt, and thee, because he knew—because he suspected,—that thou

wert the cause, You fought; he fell,—and, with what seemed his dying lips, (for even in death his spite was not diminished,) repeated the demoniacal falsehood; boasting of the degradation of one whose only shame was that she did not requite his presumption with a dagger.”

—Again the figure of the unhappy girl was elevated by passion into the port of a destroying deity. But she perceived that Juan was shocked by a display of fire so unwomanly, and, indeed, so fearful; and this instantly transformed her into another being.

“This too, *this* too,” she cried, shedding tears of humiliation, “this too, is a consequence of his malice, for it has converted me into the thing I am not,—into what seems a fury or a demon. Dost thou believe I am—dost thou believe I *was* a creature formed of passions, that should belong only to men? No! oh heaven, oh no! it is the madness that comes from the viper’s

tooth: Stung, vilified, robbed of respect and happiness, how even can a woman sit down in peace, unless she can die? unless she can die? She will have her vengeance, believe it; and well is it for her, when it is won by the hands of a brother or sire.— Yet, believe this, if thou wilt, for I am not what I was; believe aught,—anything, save the lies of Hilario. With his dying lips he defamed me—with his dying hand he revoked the slander, and avowed himself a villain. Behold the refutation of calumny.”

As she spoke, she drew from her bosom, with a trembling grasp, and put into Juan's, a scrap of paper, on which he read, with extreme surprise, the following words, traced with a hand feeble and agitated, yet well known to him:

“What I have said of Magdalena del Naufragio,” (or Magdalena of the Wreck; for by this name she was known at Isabela,) “is false.

In malice and folly I have laid perjury on my soul; and, as I now speak the truth, I pray heaven to forgive me.—Amen.

“ANTONIO DEL MILAGRO.”

“Good heaven!” said Juan, “is it possible Antonio could commit this dastardly crime? Alas, Magdalena, I *have* done you a grievous wrong, and I beseech you, pardon me.—This thing was not only wicked, but marvellous. (The paper is stained with blood.)—The saints acquit me of his death, for it was I who shed it! I am glad he died penitent—What brought him to this justice? I held my dagger to his throat, yet he cried, with a devilish malice and courage, ‘Strike, for—’ But I will not repeat his sinful and exalting falsehoods.—Alas, that his blood should be upon my soul! the blood of his father’s son!”

Magdalena surveyed the self-accusing looks of the prisoner, with much emotion; and twice dis-

thrice she opened her lips to give him comfort, or to continue her dark and singular story, and yet failed, as many times, to speak. At last, she clasped her hands upon her bosom, as if, by an effort of physical strength, to give support and resolution to her heart, and said, with low and interrupted accents,

“Lament no more for a sin thou hast not committed. Thou wert deceived—Hilario died not by thy hands.”

“Hah!” exclaimed Juan, “dost thou tell me the truth? Is Hilario yet living? God be thanked! God be thanked! for I am not a murderer!”

He fell upon his knees, and looking up to heaven with joy, beheld not the grief and trepidation with which his companion surveyed his raptures.

“I told thee, not that he lived, but that thou didst not slay him,” said the nun, with an effort.
—“Had my father come to my side, and

looked upon this paper, after hearing the story of Hilario's baseness, what think you he should have done?"

"Killed him, I must allow," said Juan, rising to his feet: "for even his deep penitence could scarcely be permitted to stand as the sole penalty of such an offence.—Alas, Magdalena, my mind is beset with sore misgivings. How was that paper obtained? How did Hilario die? Thou growest pale! Heaven shield me! didst thou, didst *thou*—?"

He paused with terror. The maiden replied instantly, and almost with firmness:

"Hear the truth, even to the last syllable; for even *thy* good opinion I will not purchase by subterfuge. To Villafana,—a wretch, whose manifold villanies thou couldst not dream, (for know, that, being a sailor in the ship that bore the unlucky sisters, he devised and accomplished its destruction, that he might impiously obtain the holy vessels of silver and gold—Ay, it was Villafana, and not the tempest, that drove us

upon the rocks of Alonso—) to Villafana, from whom I learned the cause of the duel and of thy flight, I committed the charge of obtaining this recantation.—Was this wrong?" she exclaimed, giving way to affright, for Juan's looks of horror could not be mistaken: "they were two fiends together;—the villain struck the villain,—the—"

"Murderess! murderess!" cried Juan aloud, recoiling from her.

A ghastly smile passed over her countenance, and it grew into a faint laugh, which, to Juan's mistaken eye, (for he thought it the merriment of satisfaction, or indifference) seemed unnatural and dreadful while she replied, her voice hysterically belying her feelings, as much as did her countenance,

"Thou dost not think I employed him to do murder? I appeal to heaven, I did not dream he would do aught but compel the recantation from the wounded man.—What! bid him kill one so defenceless! Had he been strong and

well armed, then perhaps, indeed,—then perhaps, I might have thought it. I sought but for the paper; the rest was the deed of Villafans.”

“Oh heaven! oh holy heaven!” cried Juan; “speak not another word; rather let me die than hear more. Away! avaunt! thou art not a woman, but a fiend! and all is now as it was, and worse.—What, blood-stained! blood-stained!”

Magdalena strode towards him, striving to speak, but could only utter the words, ‘Injustice! injustice!’ mingled with the charge, ‘Leave Mexico,’ that still made a part of her perturbed thoughts. Had not Juan been entirely overwhelmed by his horror, he must have observed, that her mind was, at this moment, convulsed beyond the degree of any former agitation; that she was, in fact, in a condition both alarming and pitiable. Her countenance was most death-like, her accents wholly unnatural, and there was something of delirium on

idiotcy in the manner with which, while still muttering the broken reproof, 'Injustice,' and the charge, 'Leave Mexico,' she, all the while, extended the blood-stained paper, as if entreating him again to receive and peruse it.

As it was, he gave utterance to his horror in the words,—

"Miserable woman! the denial forced from the lips of the murdered man is of a piece with the spirit that compelled it—False, false, all!"

At these words, the paper dropped from her hands, another vacant smile distorted her visage, and she turned to depart; but before she had taken two steps she tottered, and fell to the floor with a dreadful scream, that instantly brought the guards into the prison.

The absorbing nature of their conversation had for the last two or three moments, rendered both incapable of observing that some scene of altercation had suddenly arisen at the dungeon door. High voices might be heard, as of one al-

ternately entreating and demanding admittance, which was gruffly denied by others. The shriek of Magdalena, ringing in their ears like a cry of death, brought the contention to an end, and all rushing in together, they beheld Juan endeavouring to raise the figure of his unhappy and lifeless guest from the floor.

“*Dios mio ! y peccavi !* I will kill him where he stands,” exclaimed one, rushing forward.

“Not so fast, señor Camarga,” cried the hunchback, who was at the head of all, snatching the weapon from the hands of this individual, who seemed peculiarly to thirst for the blood of the young islander. “Here’s work for the bastinado ! Where’s Villafana, ye treacherous dogs, that let women into the prison ? He shall pay for it.—Harkee, señor Camarga ; if you have any interest in this fair lady, you may help bear her to the palace. Poor fool ! these women love as arquebuses shoot : if you make them any obstruction, they burst in your hands

—and this is truer still of a musket, if you thrust it into the earth. In mine own opinion, the young hound has scorned her.

While Najara gave vent to these growling observations, Magdalena was carried out of the prison. The hunchback had reached the door, before Juan, in the confusion of the moment, thought of calling him back, to impart to him the secret of the treachery. But Najara replied only with a malediction, and departed with the lantern; so that Juan was again left to night and solitude.

CHAPTER VII.

MEANWHILE, a scene of still more tragical character was on the point of being represented within the walls of the palace.

It was a tempestuous night. The clouds, which had all day enveloped the pagan metropolis, were, at last, gathered over Tezcucó. The wind blew in gusts, with frequent rain; and as the distant thunderbolts rolled with a rumbling cadence over Mexico, vast sheets of lightning shot up in the west, illuminating sky, lake, and mountain, with a cadaverous glare.

Some five or six of the principal cavaliers were assembled with Cortes, in the great Hall of Audience, engaged in earnest and anxious debate. It happened, by accident, that the huge curtain, which, at night, was usually drawn over the window of alabaster, had been, this evening, neglected by the attendants; so that it remained, drooping in gigantic festoons from the great beam, carved into a serpent's head, which held it at the top, down to the lesser ornaments that supported it on the sides of the casement. The strong cords, by which it could be dragged into its place, hung over the central beam, flapping occasionally against the alabaster wall, as the gust, puffing in through the great door, whirled the smoke and flame of the lamps and torches, from the walls and pillars to which they were attached.

Thus, though the alabaster slabs were too thick to transmit any ordinary ray, the brighter flashes of lightning made their way through, and added, at times, a ghastly glare to the light.

of the lamps in which the countenances of the cavaliers, perturbed, as they were, assumed such an unnatural hue as might have beseeemed the ghosts of dead heroes rising to earth, to meddle again in the sport of slaughter.

The visage of the Captain-General betrayed greater anxiety, mingled with sterner wrath, than appeared on any other; and when he spoke, it was in accents brief and low, and exceedingly emphatic.

"I tell you, cavaliers," he cried, "the mystery that shrouds this treason is more frightful than the treason itself. We are at fault, señores, we are at fault. We behold enough to show us that the devils are at work about us, but not to discover in what mode they are toiling. It is clear enough that Villafana is a dog, and one day he shall hang; but I know not in what manner, nor at what time, he will bite. This is certain: he has suffered one of the Mexicans to leave his cell, and communicate with Xicotencal; it is certain, also, that

this cur of Tlascala will leave the camp before day-dawn; and how many of his warriors will follow after him, that I leave you to conjecture. This I have from a true mouth. He is incensed, first, on account of Juan Lerma; and, secondly, I doubt not, the Mexican has made the most of his growling temper and present discontent. What sayst thou, Sandoval? What hinders thee to lie in wait, and, following at his heels, so do with him, that his Tlascalans who desert afterwards, may be frightened on the path, and so return to us? There are good trees on the wayside!"

"Ay," replied Don Gonzalo, grimly, "when there is any executioner's work towards, I am sure to play jack-ketch. I am loath to deal with a man that hath been so valiant; but if he be a traitor, it is right he should die. What if I give him the bastinado, Turkwise? Methinks that would bring him into a sounder temper."

"It would but inflame the choler of his

"~~pride~~ people," said the shrewder general; "~~for~~ whereas his sudden death, dealt upon him in the act of desertion, will strike them with fear. Take thou a rope with thee, my son, and fear not to use it."

The young cavalier nodded assent, and the general went on:

"Concerning the ambassadors, thus secretly treating with a traitor, methinks they have forfeited all claim to protection?"

"Ay," said Alvarado; "and the bastinado, of which Sandoval spake, may serve the good purpose of opening their lips, and thereby revealing, not only the depth of the Tlascalan defection, but the length to which Villaforte and his curs have gone with them; let us read for them, and try the experiment. Or stay—here are cords enough on that curtain! One of these, twisted round the brow with a sword-hilt, I have known to bring out a man's tongue as far as his eyes."

The cavaliers turned to the window, and the

bitter smile of the Captain-General was made death-like, by a flash, brighter than usual, shooting through the wall.

"A good thought," he said; "but we will not be precipitate. We have them secured; and however Villafana may permit them to speak with others, he is somewhat too wise to set them free. We will have this thing considered in the morning."

At this moment, Don Francisco de Guzman made his appearance in the chamber, his visage disfigured by a black patch, and somewhat pale. But this, as it was soon discovered, was caused rather by care than sickness.

"Señor," he exclaimed, "I have been to seek the ambassadors—They have escaped!"

"Escaped!" echoed Cortes. "Thou art beside thyself! And the villain Alguazil, has he fled with them? I will tear his flesh with pincers! What! release the infidels under my eye?"

"So please you," said Guzman, "this, I

think, was no resolved treachery, but an effect of infatuation. The wine that came to us to-day was too strong for the watchmen: where they got it, I know not; but I found them sound asleep at the open door."

"They shall be scourged, till they drop more blood than they have drunk wine," said Don Hernan, furiously. "And the prison-guards also? Hah? The prisoner has escaped?"

"Not so," said the cavalier: "all's well there, save—"

"And Villafana? Speak me the word—Has he fled?"

"Señor mio, no: he is in the prison, carousing with Juan Lerma, as the guards say. I heard his voice through the door."

"Carousing? does Juan Lerma take his death so merrily? By'r lady, devil as he is, it is a sin to slay him!"

"As to the prisoner," said Guzman, "I know not whether he be merry or not; but I myself (for I had mine ear to the door,) heard

Villafana smack his lips, and vow he 'would drink no more, this being no time to be thick-witted.' But every one knows Villafana: his bibbing once brought him to the strappado."

"Ay; and it shall bring him to the gallows. —It is the fate of the can-clinker—all spoken in three words—drunk, whipped, and gibbeted! —Didst thou worm naught from the guards? They were of his own appointing."

"Not a syllable," replied Guzman: "I do believe they have been too much frightened, and are now penitent men."

"It may be," said Cortes, "it may be; but I would I could look into the dreams of Villafana. If I punish him for the flight of the ambassadors, it may be that I disperse an imposthume before it comes to a head; or it may prove, that I drive the matter into the more vital organs of this body politic, till all be corrupted and consumed. What say ye to a little torture inflicted on Villafana himself? Yet he is a bold dog, and may not speak.

They say he winced not under the lash. I swear to you, my friends, I am in a strait."

While Cortes thus admitted the difficulty in which he felt himself pressed, and the cavaliers were divided in their counsels, they perceived a common soldier intrude himself into the chamber, and boldly approach them.

"Hah!" said Alvarado, ever hot of temper, "who art thou, Sir Gallows-bird, that bringest thy knave's pate among cavaliers in council?"

"Hold! touch him not; 'tis the Barba-Roxa!" exclaimed Don Hernan. "What impertinence is this, sirrah? Who bade thee hitherward?"

"God and my good saint," said Gaspar, flinging himself on his knees, and adding, with the greatest impetuosity, "Pardon, señor! pardon for two unhappy men! Or if that cannot be, why pardon then for *one*; and I care not how soon you hang up the others."

"What means the fool? Art thou distracted?"

"Señor!" cried the soldier, wringing his hands, "I am a knave and traitor. Grant me the life of Juan Lerma, who meant you no wrong, and I will give you, for the rope and sword, two hundred and fifty such traitors as the world never saw, and myself among them; for I have signed my name with knife and arrow, and sworn myself to brotherhood, under the pains of hell, which I care not how soon may come upon me."

"Let some one of you look to the door," said Cortes, quickly: "and see that the sentinels keep their eyes open.—How now, Gaspar! what is this thou sayest? Art thou indeed a villain? I should have struck on the mouth any soldier that had said it of thee."

"I am what I said," replied Gaspar; "your excellency refused to listen to me, when I pleaded for Juan Lerma; and I was incensed. I said to myself, señor, 'I have saved your life, and yet you deny me the life of my friend, who, in ignorance, broke a decree, yet knew no

maire. Besides, señor, you called me a dog, ^{an} an officious, presuming dog; whereas I was not a dog *then*, but *now*. Well, señor, while I was in a passion, the devil came to me, and tempted me, and I signed my name to my perdition."

"What!" said Alvarado, recoiling with devout horror, "hast thou really signed over thy soul to Satan? We will burn thee, thou devil's penitent, in a hot fire!"

"Speak on," said Cortes. "What meanest thou by this mummer? What devil is this? for, though Satan be walking now among us, yet, I think, it could not be he."

"It was Villafana," replied Gaspar; "and heaven pardon me, for I think it must be Apollyon in his likeness!"

At this communication, the cavaliers all stared at one another, and Cortes exclaimed,

"Two hundred and forty men! What! are there so many knaves of his party?"

"Ay, and many more, who will help, but

will not put down their names upon paper," replied Gaspar. "But your excellency says nothing of Juan Lerma. If you will pardon him, your excellency shall hear all."

"How, sirrah!" cried Cortes, sternly, "do you avow yourself a sworn traitor, and yet dictate to me terms of mercy? Speak, or you shall have that to your brows which will bring out words with screams."

Gaspar sprang to his feet,—boldly, fearlessly, and even insolently, returning the look of the Captain-General:

"Your excellency has no heart, and I have," he cried. "Do your will upon us both; and reckon my death to your conscience, as you do that of Juan Lerma. You shall not have a word more. Here are my arms.—What cavalier will demean himself to tie them? I will meet your excellency at the judgment-seat."

"Thou art but a fool," said Cortes, moderating his anger,—or, at least, mollifying the severity of his accents; for his countenance

yet gleamed with wrath. "Thou knowest that, having saved my life at Xochimilco, I can in no case take thine."

"But I leave that to the laws, without asking any mercy," said the Red Beard, obstinately: "I ask the life of Juan Lerma, condemned without law."

"Dost thou impugn my justice, fellow?" cried the ferocious De Olid. "I swear to thee, when thou art brought to be judged, I will give thee a double quantity, for this very reason."

While the cavalier gave utterance to so excellent a proof of his equity, Alvarado, with whom Gaspar had been a favorite, whispered in his ear,

"Speak out, and fear not. It stands not with the captain's honour to barter men's lives for knave's confessions; yet he shall pardon the young man, thy friend, as I am thy guarantee."

"What say ye, cavaliers?" cried Cortes:

"does it become me to remit a sentence of death, at such mutinous intercession?"

Before any of the officers could reply, Gaspar, confiding in the promise of Alvarado, threw himself again at the general's feet, crying,

"Señor, I am not a mutineer, but a penitent. I am mad to think that one,—so good a friend, so valiant a soldier, so true a follower, (for there is no falsehood in Juan Lerma,) should die for a small matter,—saving Don Francisco's presence,—when there are so many rogues about us that go unpunished. But I leave him to your excellency's mercy, trusting that your excellency will reconsider the judgment and release him. Therefore I will speak, in this trust; and I pray heaven to remember the act, be it merciful, or be it cruel.—This is what I have to say: In my passion I betook me to Villafana; who, promising to save Lerma's life, I signed with him; though the first act of guilt was to take your excellency's life. Holy mo—

“Heaven! pardon me; but I was very much incensed. Well, señor, I found on the paper the names of two hundred and forty men, and I will tell you such as I remember; but if you will send to the prison, and suddenly seize the Alguazil, you will find the list in his bosom.”

“Quinones, see thou to this,” said Cortes, turning to the master of the armory, who made one of the council. “Take with thee none but hidalgos, and be sudden, making no noise, and shedding no blood—Yet stay: this will not do, neither. Hark thee, Gaspar, man, when shall this precious earthquake rumble into the upper air?”

“To-morrow,” replied the soldier; and then, to the horror and astonishment of all present, he divulged the whole scheme of assassination, as Villafana had himself spoken it in the prison:

“With a letter from my father, too!” cried Cortes, apparently more struck with the heart-

less barbarity of the stratagem, than with anything else in Gaspar's communication: "This is indeed the Judas-kiss, the—Faugh! these were the words of Magdalena!"

While he muttered these words to himself, he was roused by a sudden voice at the great door, and heard distinctly the unexpected voice of Villafana, saying, as he wrangled with the guards,

"Oh, 'slid, you take upon you too much! I come at the order of the general."

"Admit Villafana," said Cortes, in tones that penetrated loudly to the farthest limits of the room, for the cavaliers were stricken into a boding silence at the accents of the Alguazil: "Admit my trusty Villafana." And Villafana entered.

He was evidently flushed with wine, and it was for that reason, doubtless, that he did not seem to observe the presence of his forsworn associate, nor the suspicious act of two cavaliers who stole from the group, and took pos-

session of the door by which he had entered. He approached with a reckless and confident, though somewhat stupid air, exclaiming, after divers humbled scrapes and salaams,

"I come at your excellency's bidding, according to appointment. This was the hour, please your excellency—but 'tis a scurvy night, with much thunder and lightning."

"Ay, truly," said Cortes, with a mild voice while all the rest stood in the silence of death, "but, being so observant, Villafana, how comes it you have not remarked that you are here without the Indian Techeechee, whom I commanded you to bring hither at this hour!"

"Señor," said the Alguazil, a little confused, "that old Ottomi is a sly dog, and, I doubt me, not over-honest."

"I doubt me so, too," said Cortes, in the same encouraging tones; "yet, honest or false, sly or simple, methinks thou shouldst not have suffered him to escape."

"Escape! what, Techeechee escape!" cried

Villafana with unaffected surprise :—“ He, no! I did but give the gray infidel a sop of wine, and straightway he hid himself in a corner, to sleep off his drunkenness. And—and,—” continued he, with instinctive though clumsy cunning,—“ and I thought it would be unseemly to bring him to your excellency in that condition. I beg your excellency’s pardon for making him acquainted with such Christian liquor; but it was out of pity, together with some little hope of converting him to the faith; and, besides, I knew not his head was so weak. I will fetch him to your excellency in the morning.”

“ Why, this is well,” said the Captain-General, with such insinuating gentleness as characterizes the snake, when closing softly on his prey; “ and I doubt not thou canst give me as good an account of the ambassadors. It is said to me, that they also have escaped.”

“ Good God !” cried Villafana, startled not only out of his confidence, but, in great mea-

sure, out of his intoxication, by such an announcement; "the ambassadors escaped! It cannot be!"

"Pho, they have hurt thee more than I thought,—even to the point of destroying thy memory," rejoined the Captain-General, with the blandishment of a smile. "There is blood upon thy shoulder: I doubt not, thou wert severely hurt, while attempting to prevent their flight. No one ever questioned the courage of Villafana."

"Yes, señor, yes—no—yes; that is,—I meant to say—Saints of heaven!"—And here the Alguazil paused, completely sobered,—that is, restored to his senses, but not to his wits; for he perceived himself in a difficulty, and his invention pointed out no means of escape. He rolled his eyes, haggard at once with debauch and alarm, over the cavaliers, and, though the lofty figure of Alvarado concealed Gaspar from his view, he beheld enough in the extraordinary

sedateness of all present, to fill him with the most racking suspicions. He turned again to Cortes, and commanding his fears as much as he could, went on, with an appearance of boldness,

“Alas, noble señor, if the ambassadors *be* escaped, I am a lost man,—for I trusted too much to the vigilance of others, and I should not have done so. Alas, señor,” he continued, with more energy, as his mind began to work more clearly, “I have committed a great offence in this negligence ; but I vow to heaven, it was owing to my fears of Juan Lerma, who made many efforts to escape, and had strong friends to help him. Your excellency may see the necessity I was under, to give all my thoughts to him ; for, some one having furnished him with a dagger, he foully attacked me, not on my guard, giving me this wound ; and had it not been for the sudden rushing in of the guard, I should certainly have been killed.”

Thus spoke the Alguazil, with returning craft, mingling together fiction and fact with an address which astonished even himself:

“Yes, señor,” he continued, satisfied with the strength of his argument, and now elated with a prospect of providing against the effects of his imprudent disclosures in the prison; “yes, señor, and the young man, besides thus wounding me, swore he would have me hanged for a conspiracy; stating roundly, as the guards will witness (I am certain that Esteban, the Left-Handed, heard him), that being a notorious grumbler, any such fiction would be believed of me. As if this would make me a conspirator! whereas, your excellency knows, according to the proverb, Barking dogs are no biters.” And the audacious ruffian, relapsing into security, attested his innocence by a gentle laugh and the sweetest of his smiles.

“Again I say, thou speakest well,” said Cortes, carelessly descending from the platform, on which he had mounted at the approach of

Villafana: "Thine arguments have even satisfied me of the folly of certain charges brought against thee by this mad fellow, here, at thy elbow."

As he spoke, Alvarado, taking his instructions rather from a consentaneous feeling of propriety than from any hint of Don Hernan's, moved aside, and Villafana's eyes fell upon the figure of Gaspar.

"Think of it, good fellow," said Cortes, laying his hand upon Villafana's shoulder, as if to support himself a little; "the things he said of thee are innumerable, and excessively preposterous. He averred, for instance, that thou wert peevishly offended, because I had not invited thy presence to the festivities of the morning banquet, and wert resolved to come, whether I would or not, and that with a letter from my father in one hand, and a dagger in the other. Eh! is not this outrageous? He said besides,—But, o' my life, thou hast bled too much from this wound!" Juan

Lerma strikes deep, when the fit is on him.
I hope thou art not faint, man?"

To these benevolent expressions, the Alguazil replied by turning upon the general a countenance so bloodless, and an eye filled with such ecstacy of despair, (for if the poniards of all had been at his throat, he could not have been more perfectly apprized of his coming fate,) that Cortes must have been struck with some feeling of commiseration, had not his nature been somewhat akin to that of a cat, which delights less to kill than to sport with the agonies of a dying victim. As it was, he continued to torment the abandoned wretch, by adding pleasantly, "And what thinkest thou of this, too, my Villafana? Two hundred and forty conspirators to rush in when the blow was struck, doubtless to carve their dinners from the ribs of my cavaliers!—Ah, Villafana, Villafana! thou shouldst have a care of thy friends. Our enemies are harmless, but our friends are

always dangerous.—What dost thou say to all this, Villafana?—Knaves! hadst thou twenty daggers in thy jerkin, thou wert still but an unfanged reptile!”

While he spoke in this jestful mood, he was sensible that Villafana, (doubtless with an instinctive motion, of which he was himself unconscious, being apparently turned to stone,) was stealing his hand up towards his bosom, as if to grasp a weapon. The moment the member had reached the opening of his garment, Cortes caught him by the throat, and giving utterance to his last words with a voice of thunder, and employing a strength irresistible by such a man as Villafana, he hurled him to the floor, at the same instant placing his foot on his throat. Then stooping down, and thrusting his hand into the traitor's bosom, he plucked out, at a single grasp, a poniard, a letter, and the fatal list of conspirators. He pushed the first aside, read the superscription of the second with a laugh, and casting his

eye upon the third, devoured its contents with an avidity that left him unconscious of the murmurs of the fierce cavaliers, and the groans of the wretched Alguazil, strangling under his foot.

“What, señor! will you rob the gallows of its prey?” cried Alvarado, pointing his sword at the prostrate traitor, as, indeed, did all the rest; (having drawn them at the moment when Cortes seized him by the throat :) “His crime is manifest to all: what need of trial? Every man his steel through the dog!”

“Hold!” cried the Captain-General; “this were a death for an hidalgo. Up, cur! up, and meet thy fate! Up!” And he spurned the wretch with his foot.

The Alguazil rose up, his face black with blood, which not perfectly dispersing, even at release from strangulation, remained in leopard-like blotches over his visage, ghastfully contrasted with the ashy hues that gathered between them. As he rose, his arms were seized

by two or three cavaliers; and Sandoval, as quick in action as he was sluggish in speech, snatching the rich sword-sash of samite from his own shoulders, instantly secured them behind his back.

"For the love of God, señores!" cried Villafana, finding speech at last, "what do you mean? what do you design? You will not kill an innocent man? Will you judge me at the charge of a liar? Gaspar is my sworn foe. I will make all clear.—Señor, I have been drinking, and my mind is confused: take me not at this disadvantage. Oh, for God's sake, what do you mean?—The list? what, the list? 'Tis for a merry-making—a rejoicing for my birthday. I will explain all to your excellencies.—I am an innocent man.—Gaspar is a forsworn caitiff—a caitiff, señores, a caitiff!—I claim trial by the civil judges."

"Gag him," cried one.

"Strike him on the mouth," said another. And Villafana, gasping for breath, uttered,

for a moment; nothing but inarticulate murmurs.

"De Olid, Marin, De Ircio," cried Cortes, rapidly, and with inexpressible decision, "ye are judges of life and death; Sandoval and Alvarado, by right of office, ye can sit in judgment; Quinones, Guzman, and the rest, I make you, in the king's name, special associates of the others.—Why, here is a court, not martial but civil; and the dog shall have judgment to his content! He stands charged of treason.—Guilty, señores? or not guilty?"

"Guilty!" cried all with one voice: and De Olid added, "Let us take him into the garden, and hang him to the cedar-tree."

"To the window," said Cortes, pointing with his sword to the stout cords, hanging so invitingly from the serpent's-head; and in an instant the victim was dragged upon the platform.

Up to this moment, his fears had been ut-

tered rather in vehement complaints than in outcries ; but now, when he perceived that he was condemned by a mockery of trial, doomed without the respite of a minute's space to pray, the rope dangling before his eyes, and already in the hands of a cavalier, who was bending it into a noose, he uttered a piercing scream, and endeavoured to throw himself on his knees.

" Mercy !" he cried, " mercy ! mercy ! I will confess—I can save all your lives — Mercy ! mercy !"

Of all the sights of horror and disgust, villany, transformed at the death-hour, into its natural character and original of cowardice, is among the most appalling. Villafana was as brave as a ruffian could be ; but when imagination is linked in the same spirit with vice, courage expires almost at the same moment with hope. With a weapon in his hand, and that at liberty, Villafana, perhaps, would have manifested all the valour in which despair perceives the only

hope; and died like a man. As it was, bound and grasped in the arms of strong men, entirely helpless and equally without hope, his death staring him in the face, he gave himself up at once to unmanly fears, and wept, screamed, and prayed, until the guards, at watch in the vestibule, sank upon their knees and coned over their beads to divert their senses from cries so agonized and so horrible.

As he strove to prostrate himself before his inexorable judges, he was pulled up by the cavaliers, and among others by Don Francisco de Guzman, whose countenance he recognized.

"Save me, Guzman! save me!" he cried; "for thou wert once of the party—Save me!"

"Peace, wolf—"

"Mercy! mercy! noble señor!" he continued, turning to Cortes: "I am but one of many. Guzman is as false as I; I charge him

with treason: he has abused your excellency's ear!—Listen, señores, and spare me my life: give me a day—give me but to-night, to pray and confess, and you shall have all. There are cavaliers among us—Mercy, for the love of heaven!—Camarga, the Dominican,—Don Palmerino de Castro,—Muertazo of Toledo, Carabo of Seville,—Artiaga, Santa - Rosa, Bravo, Aljaraz, and a hundred more—”

“Peace, lying villain!” cried the Captain-General—“What ho, the rope! quick, the rope!”

“A moment to repent! a moment to repent!” shrieked the victim, struggling so violently to bring his hands before him, as if to clasp them in prayer, that the silken band crackled behind him, and his hands turned black with congested blood; “a moment to repent! for I am a sinner. What! would you condemn my soul, too? Saints, hear me! angels, plead for me! A priest, for the love of heaven! I killed Artiaga of Cadiz; I scut-

tled the ship at Alonso, drowned the nuns, and stole the church-plate.—Call Magdalena—Where's Magdalena?—You are murdering me! Mercy! mercy! I killed Hilario, too — I poniarded him in the old wounds, inflicted by Juan Lerma—I have much to repent—A priest, for the love of God! A priest, oh, a priest!”

Thus raved the villain, stained with a thousand crimes; and if aught had been wanting to steel the hearts of his executioners, enough was divulged in the unavailing abandonment with which he accused himself of misdeeds, so many and so atrocious. While his neck was yet free from the rope, he struggled violently, but without any attempt to do a mischief to his unrelenting murderers; his resistance was, indeed, like that of a cur, under the chastisement of a cruel and brutal master, which howls and contends, and yet fears to employ its fangs against the tyrant. But when he found, at last, that the cavaliers were actually putting the hasty halter about his neck, his

struggles were not greater to escape than to inflict injury. He shook and tossed his head in distraction, and Don Francisco de Guzman, endeavouring to seize him by the beard, he caught the hand of the cavalier betwixt his teeth, and held it with the gripe of a tiger.

"Hell confound thee, wolf!" cried Guzman, groaning with pain, and striking him over the face with the hilt of his sword, but in vain: "Help me, cavaliers, or he will have my hand off!—Villain, unlock thy teeth.—"

"Stand aside—this will unloose thee," said one, thrusting his rapier into the thigh of the vindictive wretch; who no sooner felt the cold steel penetrate his flesh, than he opened his mouth to utter a yell. "Whip him up *now*—So much for traitors!"

It was the last scream of the assassin. His lips uttered one more cry to heaven; the name of Magdalena was cut short, as the noose closed upon his throat, and ended in a hoarse, rattling, gulping whine, that did not itself

prevail beyond the space of a second. As he shot up to the top of the window, an intense glare of lightning flashed through the alabaster, and his figure, traced upon that lustrous and ghastly medium, was seen dangling and writhing in the death-agony. The next moment the huge curtain was drawn over the dreadful spectacle: but those who paused a moment to look back, could behold the convulsions of the dying miscreant giving motion, and sometimes protrusion, to the dark folds of the drapery.—When all was silent, in the darkness of the night, the watchmen in the vestibule could yet hear the pattering of blood-drops falling from his mangled limb, upon the sonorous wood of the platform.

But there were other scenes now occurring which, for a time, drove from their thoughts the memory of Villafana.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE scene of death in which they were engaged, had so employed the thoughts of the cavaliers, that they were, for a time, insensible to many tumultuous noises in the city, which, beginning at the moment when the struggles and outcries of Villafana were fiercest and loudest, increased every instant, until all was uproar.

At first, as they rushed in disorder to the doors, they thought the din was caused by a renewal of the storm, or rather the sudden outbursting of a tornado; which, overwhelming the houses of some of the poorer citizens, and

burying them among the ruins, might account for the screams and yells that were mingled with other noises. But they soon exchanged this fear for one more stirring, when, as they rushed into the air, they heard an alarm ringing from the chapel-bell on the top of the pyramid, drums beating to arms, arquebuses firing in several different quarters, and were made sensible that a conflict was raging in the town.

"Dios!" cried one; "the conspirators are upon us! Let us back to the hall and defend ourselves!"

"My life upon it," said Gaspar, "the conspirators will not stir till Villafana opens his lips to them.—Heaven rest his soul!—Hark! these are the yells of Indians."

"On, friends!" exclaimed Cortes, perceiving the garden full of soldiers, rushing from various parts of the palace, as if to seek the fray. "This is Tlascalan work—a knavery of Xicotencal. Hah! hark! see! 'tis an assault upon

the prison ! Ho, Castilians ! Ho, Christians ! cavaliers and soldiers, to arms ! Haste, to arms !”

While the soldiers, collecting together at the well-known voice of the Captain-General, began to rush with him towards the prison, over which, besides hearing the shouting of the watchmen at the doors, they beheld three blazing arrows shot up into the air, their alarm was directed to another quarter, by a violent cannonade from the squadron, moored yet at the entrance of the little river ; and looking that way, they perceived to their astonishment and fear, no less than four of the brigantines suddenly enveloped in flames.

“ Guzman and Quinones !” cried Cortes, with instant determination, “ to the prison, with what force ye can pick up on the way. Shoot all fugitives, as well as all assailants. The rest follow me to the river ; for I would mine arms should be burned, rather than my vessels.”

By this time, all the Spaniards who were capable of bearing arms were in the open air, and following, not less the shouts of Cortes than the crash of the falconets, ran hastily towards the fleet, which, it was now evident, was furiously beset by multitudes of Indians in canoes. The flash of the explosions and the flames bursting ruddily out from sails and cordage, revealed them clustering with impetuosity around the devoted vessels, whose crews, it was equally apparent, were making a gallant resistance. In this light, the houses bordering upon the water were seen covered with citizens, looking on with a tranquillity, which showed that their share in the unexpected hostilities, if indeed they had any, was entirely passive. A more agreeable sight was disclosed to Cortes, as he ran onwards, in the appearance of many thousand Tlascalans, rushing down the narrow meadows which bordered the canal, with such alacrity of speed and such

furious cries of 'Tlascala!' and 'Castilla!' as convinced him of their fidelity and affection.

"It is a Mexican device, after all," he muttered; "a plan of the ambassadors. Well done for thee, Villafana!—Bold varlets, these! What! down with your demi-culverins and sakers, Orozca! Where is my good cannonier, Juan Catalan? We will aid the vessels from the shore."

The mariners, however hotly engaged, replied to the cries of their friends with shouts of courage; and redoubling their exertions, they succeeded not only in repelling the assailants, whose obvious aim was to fire the whole fleet, from those ships not yet ignited, but even in extinguishing the flames in the less fortunate four. In this, they were doubtless materially assisted by the condition of the planks and timbers, which being of green wood, the flames would perhaps have confined their ravages to the more combustible sails and cordage, and

soon expired for want of fuel. They weighed anchor also, and taking advantage of the gusts which still blew over the lake, six of the largest and strongest set sail, and boldly plunged among the canoes, overturning and sinking many, while the others, receiving assistance from the shore, betook themselves to the little harbour, dragging with them their disabled consorts.

In this manner, it soon became evident that the danger in this quarter was over; and Cortes, directing that the position of the brigantines should be strengthened by a temporary battery at the mouth of the river, returned to inspect the condition of the city in the neighbourhood of the palace.

The sounds of contention were over; and one passing through the garden, and listening to the moaning of the winds through the trees, could scarce have believed that half an hour before it had been a scene of such warlike bustle. The bell rang no longer, the drums,

trumpets, and arquebuses were silent, and the sentinels paced to and fro at their stations, as if nothing unusual had happened. The only sounds indeed that now vexed the calm of the night, were the occasional explosion of a falconet from some brigantine, afar among the shadows of the lake, still pursuing the retreating canoes. The attack was perhaps unpremeditated ; or, perhaps, its only object was to taunt and defy. At all events, it was now over ; and in less than an hour from the time of the first alarm, the cry of *all's-well*, could be heard through the different quarters of the city.

Before this satisfactory conclusion of an evening so eventful, the Captain-General was doomed to have his equanimity put to the proof by a new trial. A double line of guards surrounded the prison, and Guzman, Quinones, and Gaspar Olea were among them, the last wringing his hands, and bewailing ; but the prison-door was open, a thin smoke issued from it, and he could see, at a glance, that the

only persons in the apartment were a few soldiers, dashing water over its partly consumed floor. Under the very threshold lay the bodies of two soldiers, fearfully mangled; another was writhing, gasping, and dying in the arms of his comrades; and a fourth, severely wounded, was narrating to Quinones the particulars of an assault, made, as he averred, by ten thousand devils, or Mexicans, who sprang suddenly out of the earth, killed or dispersed the whole guard, carried off the prisoner, or burned him, he knew not which, (for he lay upon the ground, counterfeiting death,) and then, setting fire to the building, vanished quite as suddenly as they came.

“Were these men Mexicans or Tlascalans?” demanded Cortes, without betraying any sign of feeling.

The soldier started at the sound of his leader’s voice, and hastily replied,

“In good faith, señor, I know not, for I was somewhat overcome with fear.”

“And with wine, sirrah!” exclaimed the General. “But it matters not—thou art too stupid to answer now. Have this fellow into the den, Quinones, and let him be brought to me to-morrow.—Señor Don Francisco, we will walk to the palace.”

He put his arm into Guzman's, and dragging him to a little distance, where no beam of torch, or cresset illuminated his visage, exclaimed, eagerly,

“Tell me the truth, Francisco :—has he perished by fire in the prison, or has he escaped me?”

“Señor,” replied Guzman, “his star, or his devil, has helped him.”

“Why then the fiends sieze thee, and all false friends, who plague me!” cried Cortes, giving way to passion. “Is it thus I am to be cheated?”

“Señor,” said Guzman, moderately, but without fear; “I have mine own cause of distress, for my hand is horribly mangled, and

I have heard that the bite of a dying man causes mortification. So, with this pain of body and mind, I may not speak good counsel or good defence.—When I reached the prison, it was empty and on fire. Had not your excellency interfered with the execution this day—”

“Ay, there again!” muttered the Captain-General; “mine own hand is made to befool me; it pulls out of the pit faster than my foot tramples in. Hark thee, Guzman, dost thou not think this young man is protected by some special providence?”

“I, señor?”

“Why, look you, what could have carried him through the tribes of the West, to the South Sea, and back again?—(a device of thy scheming, too!) And, didst thou not see, I was about to run him through, in the very act of mutinous resistance, when a brute and insensate dog seized my swordblade in his mouth? And now, for the third time, what

but his angel could have brought to his prison-door yonder infidels of Mexico—his only friends, I think?”

“Let your excellency question, if this circumstance will not, without removing him from punishment, give a still stronger excuse for it? The scribe visited him in the dungeon; a paction with the enemy, sealed by the act of flight with them to their stronghold, has confirmed him thrice over a traitor.”

“Ay, by heaven! it is true!” said Cortes, smiting his hands together; “and, by and by, I will take him out of his hiding-place, and crown the day of victory with a double triumph!”

“And who can affirm,” quoth Don Francisco, “that the misbelievers have not taken him for a sacrifice? It is said, the coronation of Guatimozin is deferred only until he can provide a Castilian victim to do honour to the ceremony. By my faith, señor, there is a pleasant twitch in my cheek,—ay, in the scar

of the rapier-wound—at the very thought of this retribution!”

“Now, by heaven,” said Cortes, with an altered voice, “villain as he is, I cannot rejoice that such a dismal fate should befall him. Death, indeed, but not a death of horror! Dost thou think this, then, can be his doom? Alas, poor youth! had he but some one to lament him or to avenge, I were better satisfied with what I have done. I swear to thee, Francisco, we are e’en as base knaves as himself; for we have employed our strength—our cunning and our strength—against a creature that is utterly friendless. Alas, I say; for I remember me of the days of old; and surely I loved him once as my own soul.”

This outbreking of feeling did not at all surprise Guzman, who had been familiar from the beginning with the ebbings and flowings of Don Hernan’s hate, and who had several times seen him, when the destiny of Juan seemed already closed, affected so much that he shed

tears, as he did at the present moment. But Guzman was acquainted with a spell which never failed to banish all compunction from the General's breast; and he did not scruple to employ it now.

"It is enough!" muttered Cortes, through his clenched teeth. "Heaven and my conscience acquit me, and I will think of it no more."

With these words, he seemed to discharge from his mind all thoughts of the youth so deeply detested, and addressing himself to the task of inspecting in person the condition of all assailable points in the city, betook himself at last, and at the day-dawn, to his repose.

CHAPTER IX.

BEFORE sunrise on the following morning, many a feathered band of allies from distant tribes was pouring into Tezcuco ; for this was the day on which the Captain-General had appointed to review his whole force, assign the several divisions to the command of his favourite officers, and expound the system of warfare, by which he expected to reduce the doomed Tenochtitlan. The multitudes that were collected by midday would be beyond our belief, did we not know that the royal valley, and every neighbouring nook of Anahuac capable of cultivation, were covered by a

population almost as dense as that which makes an ant-heap of the 'Celestial Empire,' at this day.

While they were thus congregating together, marshalled under their native chiefs, emulously expressing their attachment to the Spaniard, and their enthusiasm in his cause, by the horrible clamour of drums and conches, Cortes was receiving, in the great Hall of Audience, the compliments and reverence of those cavaliers, distinguished soldiers, and valiant infidel princes, whom he had invited to the feast, with which he marked the close of his mighty preparations and the beginning of his not less arduous campaign.

A table crossed the room immediately in front of the platform, on which the noblest and most honoured guests had already taken their stations. Two others, running from pillar to pillar, extended the whole length of the apartment, leaving in the intermediate space, as well as betwixt them and the walls,

sufficient room for the passage of revellers and attendants, of which latter there were many present, bustling to and fro, in the persons of Indian boys and girls, all branded with the scarry badge of servitude. The walls, pillars, and ceiling, were ornamented with green branches of trees and viny festoons, among which breathed and glittered a multitude of the gayest and most odoriferous flowers ; and besides these, there were deposited and suspended, in many places, Indian banners and standards, as well as spears, bucklers, and battle-axes, the trophies of many a field of victory. The tables were covered with brilliant cotton-cloths, and loaded not only with all the dainties of Mexico, but with some of the luxuries of Europe, among which were conspicuous divers flagons of wine, on which many a veteran gazed with looks of anxious and affectionate expectation.

The peculiarity of the scene, animated as it was by a densely moving throng of guests in their most gallant attire, was greatly height-

ened by a circumstance, for which but few were able to account. Although full noon-day; the light of heaven was carefully excluded, and the apartment illuminated only by torches and lamps. This, though it gave picturesqueness to every object in view, was, to say the least, remarkable; and those who were most interested to watch the workings of the commander's mind, beheld in it a subject for many disturbing reflections. But, to such persons, there was another phenomenon still more unsatisfactory, in the spectacle of a line of veteran soldiers, original followers of Cortes, extending round the whole apartment, who stood against the walls, each with a spear in his hand and a *machete*,—a heavy, straight sword,—on his thigh, surveying the revellers more with the air of sentinels than companions in festivity.

While the inferior guests stood or lounged about, speculating on these curious particulars, and expecting the signal to begin the feast, which seemed to be delayed by the absence of

some important guest, Cortes occupied himself conversing with Alvarado, De Olid, Guzman, De Ircio, and other hidalgos, who stood with him on the platform, occasionally extending his notice to the young king of Tezcucó, his brother Suchel, the Tlascalán chief Chichimecatl, and other noble barbarians, who made part of the distinguished group. Many curious, and not a few anxious, eyes were turned upon them from different parts of the hall; and it was soon observed, and remarked with whispers, that Sandoval, the valiant and beloved, and Xicotencal, the gloomy, were absent from the party.

By and by, however, conjectures were put to rest by the sudden appearance of the cavalier in question, who entered with his garments in some disorder, his countenance heated and troubled, and his whole appearance that of a man just released from some exciting and laborious duty.

As soon as Cortes perceived him approach-

ing, he commanded room to be made for him on the platform, welcomed him with a smiling face and a cordial grasp of hand, and then signed to the guests to take their places at the tables.

In the bustle of festivity that followed the command, the revellers forgot to wonder at the torchlight around them and the presence of the armed guards. If a few still bent their eyes uneasily on the commander-in-chief, striving to catch the low accents with which he conversed with his immediate friends, and particularly with Sandoval, their efforts were unnoticed by the others; and, in a short time, the hum of whispers waxed into murmurs of joyous hilarity, so that the conversation on the platform could only be guessed at by the expressive visages and gestures of the cavaliers.

By and by, the feast became still more unrestrained and noisy. Wine was poured and drunk, jests were uttered, songs almost sung,

and care banished from all but a few, who still turned their looks to the platform, exchanged glances occasionally with each other, and at every bustle attending the entrance of any one at the great door, cast their eyes in that direction with much meaning anxiety.

Still, however, the feast went on, and enjoyment was becoming revelry, when the voice of Cortes was suddenly heard. The murmurs of all were instantly hushed, and all turning their eyes to the platform, they beheld the Captain-General standing erect, and eyeing them with extreme gravity of countenance, holding, at the same time, in his hand, a golden bowl of wine.

“ My brothers and fellow-soldiers,” he said, as soon as all were composed, “ it becomes us, as true and loyal Castilians, to remember our duty to the king our master, whom God preserve for a thousand years ! We are here afar from his sight, but not beyond the reach of his authority, nor the constraint of our true

allegiance. Let it not be thought that the cavaliers of Madrid will drink his health with more zeal and humility at the palace-door, than we, his true subjects, in the deserts of Mexico. A bowl, then, to his majesty our master, Don Carlos of Spain, Austria, and this New World!"

As he spoke, he knelt upon one knee, and all present, even the barbaric king at his side, doing the same thing, allegiance was pledged in the cup,—which is undoubtedly the best way to make it agreeable.

From this exhibition of humility, all rose up, shouting lusty *vivas*.

"It gratifies me," said Cortes, when this customary ebullition of loyalty was over, "to perceive that I have about me men so truly faithful to my very noble and loyal master. For in this I perceive I shall be no more afflicted with the painful necessity of exerting those powers with which his majesty has

so bountifully endowed me, even to the shedding of blood and the taking of life."

A sudden damper fell upon the spirits of many present, and all who were not apprized of the secret of Villafana's fate, looked upon Cortes with surprise.

"Know, my truly faithful and loyal friends," he went on, speaking with an appearance of solemn indignation, "that we have had among us a TRAITOR,—a Christian man and a Spaniard, yet a traitor to the king our master ! Yet, in the band of the holy apostles, there was one Judas ; and it does not become us to believe that we, sinful creatures as we are, and much more numerous, should be without our Iscariot, who would have sold our lives for silver, and sunk into perdition the interest of his majesty in this opulent kingdom. It rejoices me to know that we have had but one. The pain with which I have been filled to discover there were other knaves for his accomplices, is assuaged by the knowledge that

they were not Castilians, but infidel Indians; to whom perfidy is so natural, that it is wholly superfluous to lament its occurrence. Know therefore, my friends, and grieve not to know it, for the evil is past, that Xicotencal, General-in-chief of the Tlascalan forces, besides secretly treating with our foes, his own enemies, the men of Tenochtitlan, did, last night, traitorously abandon our standard, and set out, to throw himself, as I doubt not, into the arms of the Mexicans."

"A villain! a very vile traitor! death to the dog of an unbeliever!" were the expressions with which the revellers protested their indignation.

"Think not," said the Captain-General, in continuation, "that the villain who doth seriously pursue a scheme of disloyalty, shall escape a just retribution. The toils and sufferings which we have endured in this land, in his majesty's service, are such that I can readily excuse the murmurs with which some

have occasionally indulged in a peevish discontent. I will never account it much against a brave soldier that he has sometimes grumbled a little; but he who meditates, or practises, a treason, shall die. I have said, that among us all there was but *one* villain. Perhaps there were two; but of that we will inquire hereafter. He of whom I speak, was one to whom I had forgiven much semblance of discontent, and whom I had raised into no little favour. Yet did he conceive a foul conspiracy, having for its object no less a thing, than the destruction of this enterprise against a rich pagan kingdom, and the murder of all those who would not become the enemies of Spain. The man of whom I speak you know. It was—”

“Villafana,” muttered many, with eager, yet fearful voices; while those who had hitherto betrayed anxiety at the ominous lights and guards, turned pale in secret.

“It was indeed the Alguazil, Villafana,”

said Cortes, sternly ; “ and you shall know his villany. First, the Mexican ambassadors, last night committed to his charge, he permitted to escape, that they might be no hinderance to the ambushed infidels, then lying on the lake, ready to burn my brigantines. Secondly, being the captain of the prison, he permitted the same to be approached and sacked by other infidels, whereby a prisoner, convicted of a heavy crime and condemned to die, was snatched out of our hands, and given into those of the enemy; whom he will doubtless aid and abet in all the sanguinary resistance which they are inclined to make. Thirdly, by his persuasions, Xicotencal was induced to throw off his allegiance at the very moment when the fleet and the prison were beset, and desert from the post. And fourthly, the consummation of the whole villany was to be effected at this very hour, and on this very floor, in the blood of myself, my officers, and as I may say of your-

selves also; since none were to be spared who were not his sworn colleagues; and, certainly, there are none here so base and criminal?"

The answer to this address mingled a thousand protestations of loyalty with as many fierce calls for punishment on the traitor. In the midst of the tumult, Cortes gave a sign to two Indian slaves, who stood behind the platform; and the heavy curtain being rapidly pulled aside, the lustre of the noontide sun streamed through the pellucid wall, until lamp and torch seemed to smoulder into darkness, under the diviner ray; and the revellers looking up, beheld the ghastly spectacle of Villafana's body hanging motionless and stiff in the midst of the light.

At this unexpected sight the guests, inflamed as they were with wine, anger, and enthusiasm, were struck with horror; and if traitors were among them, as none but Cortes and themselves could say, it was not possible

to detect them by their countenances, all being equally pale and affrighted.

"Thus perish all who plot treason against the king and the king's officers!" cried the Captain-General, with a loud voice. "The rebel Xicoteneal swings upon an oak-tree, on the wayside as you go to Chalco; the mutineer Lerma hath fled to the pagans, to become a renegade and perhaps apostate; and Villafana, the traitor, hangs as you see, upon the window of our banqueting-room, to teach all who may have meditated a like villany, the fate that shall most certainly await them. —Hide the carrion!" he exclaimed to the slaves, and in an instant the frightful spectacle was excluded, along with the cheerful light of day. The return to that of the torches was like a lapse into darkness, and for a few moments, it was scarce possible for the guests to distinguish the features of those nearest to them. In the gloom, however, the voice

of the Captain-General was heard, concluding his oration :

“ Let no one of this true and loyal company be in fear,” he said, with his accustomed craft. “ The paper, on which the villain had recorded the names of such madmen as would have joined him in his crime, he was artful enough to destroy. But let the disaffected tremble. There has been one dog among us, and there may others prove so, hereafter. But I am now awake ; and the treason that may be planted, shall be discovered, and ripped before it come to the budding.— God save his majesty ! Another bowl to his greatness ! And let all fall to feasting again ; for, by and by, the signal gun will be fired for the review, and this is the last feast ye must think of sharing together, till ye can spread it again in the halls of Montezuma.”

Whatever relief might have been carried by these words to the bosoms of the guilty, the spectacle of their murdered associate had

sunk too deeply in their spirits, to allow any festive exertions. The innocent were equally shocked, and gloom and uneasiness oppressed the hearts of all.

It was felt therefore as a relief, when the signal for breaking up the feast was given by the sound of a gun from the temple-top; and all rushed out, to forget in the bustle of parade, the sickening event which had marred their enjoyment.

On this day the whole army of Cortes, of which the thousand Christians made scarcely the three-hundredth part, was marched out upon the meadows of Tezcuco, and there, with ceremonies of great state and ostentation, was reviewed, divided, and each division appointed to its respective duties.

The first division was assigned to the command of Sandoval, and was ordered to march southward to the city of Iztapalapan, which commanded the principal causeway, or approach to Mexico. The second

was given to the ferocious De Olid, whose destination was to Cojohuacan, a city south west of Mexico, the dike from which led to that betwixt the metropolis and Iztapalapan. The third was appointed to the Capitan del Salto, or Alvarado, who was to take possession of Tacuba, which commanded the shortest of the causeways. The two last divisions were ordered to proceed in company, around the northern borders of the lake, destroying the towns on the route, and separating at Tacuba.

The fleet Cortes reserved in his own hands, intending, besides commanding the whole lake, so to act with it, as to give assistance to each division as it might be needed. The royal city of Tezcuco was to be entrusted to the government of the young king Ixtlilxochitl, the cavalier Don Francisco de Guzman remaining, though somewhat reluctantly, to guide and control his actions.

under the appearance of adding to his state and security.

These preliminaries arranged, the remainder of the day was devoted to festivities. The great work of conquest was to begin on the morrow.

CHAPTER X.

THE extraordinary and exciting events which took place in the prison, that night which Juan Lerma esteemed the last he should spend upon earth, had reduced to exhaustion a body already enfeebled by inaction, and a mind almost consumed by care. Hence, when having struggled for a time with the restlessness and delirium which in such cases, usher in sleep with a thousand phantasms—apparitions both of sight and sound,—he at last fell asleep, his

slumbers were profound and dreamless. The loud alarms which drove the executioners of Villafana from the hall of audience made no impression on his ear; and even the yells that accompanied the attack on his dreary abode, were equally unheard. The guards were routed, the doors were forced, and he was lifted to his feet by unknown hands, almost before he had opened his eyes; and even voices, that at another time would have attracted his attention, and words that would have inspired him with the joy of deliverance, were all lost upon him. Nay, such was the stupor which oppressed his mind, that he was dragged from the dungeon, and hurried rapidly along through a host of infidels to the water-side, before he was convinced that all was not really a dream. Then, indeed, the bustle, the din of shrieks and Indian drums, mingled with the sounds of trumpets and

fire-arms, the howl of winds, and the splash of waves, though they recalled him to his wife, yet left him confounded, and, for awhile, incapable of understanding and appreciating his situation. In this condition he was deposited in a canoe of some magnitude, which instantly putting off from the shore, under the impulse of thirty paddles, he soon found himself darting over the lake at a speed which promised soon to remove from his eyes, and perhaps for ever, the scene of his late humiliation and suffering.

The darkness of the night was almost palpable, and, save the few torches that could be seen hurrying through the alarmed city, no other light illuminated the scene, until the moment when the four brigantines, fired by the assailants, burst up in a ruddy blaze. At this sight, a shout of triumph burst from his capturers, and altering the course of the canoe, it seemed as if they

were about to rush into the thick of the conflict.

As they approached the burning ships, Juan was able in the increasing glare, to examine the figures of his companions, and beheld the dark visages and half-naked bodies of thirty or more barbarians, each, besides his paddle, having a weighty battle-axe dangling from his wrist, and a broad buckler of some unknown material hung over his back. Two men sat by him, one on each side, and he soon discovered, that these, whom he had thought mere guards for his safe-keeping, were no other than the Ottomi Techeechee and the young prince of Mexico, the latter now freed from his disguise.

"Guatimozin," said he, no longer doubting the purpose for which he had been snatched from the prison, and resolved at once to express his disapprobation, "dost

thou think to make me a renegade to my countrymen? I swear to thee—”

“Peace, and fear not,” replied the royal chief. “Thou shalt have very sweet vengeance.”

“I ask it not, I seek it not; and surely I will not accept it, when it makes me the traitor I have been so falsely called. Am I thy prisoner?”

“My friend,” replied Guatimozin, quickly starting up, seizing a paddle from the hands of the nearest rower, and himself urging the canoe towards the nearest vessel, which was, by this time, so close at hand, that Juan could clearly perceive the figures, and almost the faces, of the Spaniards on board, contending, and, as it seemed, not unsuccessfully, both with the flames and the assailants. A great herd of Mexicans was seen fighting hand to hand with the Christians; but it was manifest, from the

cheery cries with which the latter responded to the yells of the former, and from the frequent plunges in the water, as of men leaping or cast overboard, that, in this brigantine, at least, the battle went not with the pagans. This Guatimozin remarked as clearly as Juan, and as he struck the water more impetuously with his paddle, he shouted aloud: "Be strong, men of Mexico, be strong!"

All this passed in the space of an instant. A loud cry, the rush of other canoes against the ship, and the frantic exertions of the combatants already on board to maintain their places, made it apparent that the voice of the prince was not unknown or unregarded. Still the Spaniards fought well and fiercely, and their cries of "God and St. James! Honour and Spain!" kindled its natural enthusiasm in the breast of the young islander. Forgetting his late

wrongs and oppressions, and the mournful truth, that, at this moment, the Christians were more his enemies than the Mexicans, he determined, if possible, to make his escape. Watching his opportunity, and perceiving that many ropes, sundered by the flames, were hanging over the sides of the vessel in the water, he chose a moment, when the canoe was within but ten or twelve fathoms of her, and but few of those savages who had leaped overboard were swimming near, he rose to his feet, and shouting aloud, "Help for an escaping captive! and good courage to all!" he plunged boldly into the lake.

To one who, like Juan, had rolled in his childhood among the breakers on the northern coast of Cuba, and to whom it was as easy a diversion to dive for conches in such depths as would have tried the wind of a pearl-diver, as to gather limpets and periwinkles from the

beach, it was no great exploit to leap among the puny billows of Tezcuco, and swim to an anchored vessel, even when the path was obstructed by enemies, themselves not unfamiliar with the water. His escape was so sudden and unexpected, and the prince, Techeechee, and the rowers, were so occupied with the scene of combat into which they were hurrying, that it is possible it would not have been noticed, had it not been for his exclamation. Then, perceiving him in the water, all were seized with confusion and fury, some striking at him with their paddles, some leaping over in pursuit, and all so confounded and divided in action, that the canoe was on the very point of being upset. In this period of confusion they soon lost sight of him; for it was not possible to distinguish him among the mass of infidels that were swimming about in all directions.

The cry of Juan was perhaps not heard by his fellow-Christians in the brigantine; but

there was one friend aboard, and that a brute one, whose ears were far quicker to detect his call, and whose heart was much prompter to obey. This was the dog Befo, who, having been taken from the prison on the day of the trial, and afterwards been refused admission, he so annoyed the guards by his whining and howling, and indeed all in the palace likewise, that they were glad to send him aboard a vessel, to have him out of the way, until after the time of execution, when, it was apprehended, from his remarkable affection for the prisoner, he might give additional trouble. His services were turned to good account by the sailors, during the attack; for, being instantly loosed, he sprung upon barbarian after barbarian, tumbling them into the water, or among the Spaniards, who despatched them. His appearance, fiercer than that of the largest beasts of prey in Mexico, and his savage bark not less frightful than the yell of the jaguar or

the puma, were perhaps still more effectual than his fangs ; for at the sight and sound, the Mexicans, climbing over the bulwarks, recoiled, and with screams of dismay, jumped into the water, and swam again to the nearest canoes.

In the midst of the conflict, Bepo heard the cry of his master, and loosing a barbarian, whom he had caught by the throat, he sprang to the side of the vessel, thrust his paws and nose over the gunwale, and looked eagerly into the lake, whining all the time, and barking, as if to attract Juan's notice. He then ran to the after-deck, where were several sailors busily engaged in knotting a rope that seemed to pass to the shore, or to another brigantine nearer to the lake-side ; and flinging himself over the railing here as before, he looked out and whined loudly again. As he peered thus into the darkness, a faint groan, as of one strangling in the water, came to his ears ; and the next

moment he sprung, with a wild howl, into the flood.

That groan came from Juan Lerma, who that instant was struck a violent blow, he knew not by whom or with what, which, for a time, deprived him of all sensation, and left him drowning in the lake.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Juan recovered his senses, he found himself lying in the bottom of a little canoe, urged by a single boatman, and already far from the conflict. The blow, inflicted by some blunt weapon, perhaps a club or paddle, had stunned him, yet had not wounded; and he became soon aware that he was not seriously injured. As he raised himself a little on his arm, his companion, pausing an instant from his toil, exclaimed, in the well remembered tones of the Ottomi,

“Izquauhtzin knows his friend: there is none to do him harm.”

"Techeechee!" cried the youth: "What is this? where are we going? Have they killed Guatimozin, the king? If thou art the friend thou hast so often proved, row me to the shore. Methinks we are in the middle of the lake!"

"Guatimozin is the Great Eagle's friend," said Techeechee, again plying his paddle; "he says the Great Eagle is his brother; and because of his fear of the armed people, he says, 'Let the Great Eagle sail alone with Techeechee, the old man, who has no weapons, and loves the Great Eagle very much.'"

"I am then again a prisoner!" said Juan, sadly. "Perhaps it is better,—certainly I cannot control my destiny, and very surely I perceive that Guatimozin is friendly to me. But how is this, Techeechee? I sprang from the prince's boat,—I was knocked on the head—How comes it that I am in this canoe?"

"The king picked his brother from the water," replied the Indian; "saying, 'Why

should my brother drown, when he has escaped Malintzin, him who eats blood?' 'Therefore,' said the king, 'take him to my house, for did he not carry me to his? Put upon him the robe of a king's son, with the red crown of a Teuctli, as one who is great among the nobles and fighting men; and the people shall call him the king's brother.' "

To this revelation of a fortune so magnificent, Juan answered only by a deep sigh, muttering within the recesses of his breast, "The noble's gown or the victim's shirt,—but I will live and die both a Christian and Spaniard."

Then, contenting himself with this resolve, for he no longer perceived any hope of escape, unless by killing the old man, and perhaps began to be aware how useless would be freedom, he cast his eyes about him, and endeavoured to learn his situation. The sounds of battle came but faintly to his ears, and the burning ships, which were still visible, seemed to be left far behind. Yet in the estimate he

was thus enabled to make of his distance from the fleet, there was no little deception ; for the flames were expiring, and the wind, blowing from the west, conspired with the plashing of the water to deaden the sounds of combat. In every other quarter, all was silence and gloom. An impenetrable darkness lay upon the lake. The sky was concealed by a dense canopy of clouds, and he began to wonder at the precision and understanding with which Techeechee impelled the canoe towards a point indicated by no beacon on earth or in heaven, until he perceived, immediately over the prow, what seemed a little star, as red as blood, glimmering on the very edge of the horizon. But this, he became soon convinced, was no heavenly luminary. Faint as it was, it shone steadily, and, once seen, there was no difficulty in preserving it always in the eye. He even began to be sensible, after a little time, that it increased in magnitude as he approached it ;

and, by and by, he was at no loss to believe it was a beacon-light, kindled upon some eminence in the pagan city, to guide the fleet of canoes on its return from the battle.

While he was arriving at this just conclusion, the sounds of contention dying further away in the background, he was struck by a wailing note behind, like the cry of some animal, swimming in the lake. He listened, distinguished it a second time, and commanded the Ottomi to cease paddling.

"If I know the voice of a friend, that is the whine of Befo!" he exclaimed, looking eagerly, but vainly back. "I remember me now, that I heard him bark on board the ship. Put back, Techeechee, put back! The dog is following me, and to his destruction, if we take him not up. Put back, put back!"

"'Tis the big tiger," said the Indian, very seriously. "We found him eating you in the water—he had you by the head; and

now he is following like a wolf, who never leaves the deer after having once tasted of his blood."

"Good heavens, eating me!" said Juan. "It was he, then, that held me up when I was strangling! I remember to have felt some one pull me by the hair, before I was utterly senseless. Faithful Befo! faithful Befo! there is no friend like him! And I leave him drowning, who saved me from the same death, and now follows me with affection? Put back, put back!—Nay, thou art sluggish,—old and sluggish:—I will paddle myself. What, Befo! Befo!"

Thus exclaiming, and using the paddle, which he had snatched from Techeechee, with no little skill, it was soon clear that he was drawing nigh to the animal, which, hearing his voice, replied with loud whinings that were both piteous and joyful.

"Alas, poor dog, thou art weary enough.

Hast thou not another paddle, Techeechee ? the dog is drowning."

" Techeechee fears not the ocelotl," replied the savage, with a voice somewhat quavering ; " he killed one with his spear, and the great king Montezuma said, ' The Ottomi is brave : he is Ocelotzin.' The Spanish tiger eats poor Ottomies. Techeechee has only his arrows and a macana."

" Use them not, and fear not," said Juan, already catching a sight of the struggling beast. " What, Befo ! Befo ! true Befo ! courage, Befo !"

The dog was evidently wholly exhausted ; yet at the cheery cry of the youth, and especially at the sight of him, he yelped loudly, and raised himself half out of the water, while Juan, making one more sweep of the paddle to his side, caught him by the leathern collar, and strove to drag him into the boat. But Befo's great weight and his own feebleness

rendered that impossible; and it was some time before he could prevail upon Techeechee to give him assistance, and actually lay his hand on the dreaded monster.

"Dost thou not see that he loves me?" cried Juan by way of argument; "He loves me because I have done him good deeds, and treated him kindly. He is like a man, not a tiger: he remembers a benefit as long as an injury. Give him this help, and he will love thee also."

Thus persuaded, the Ottomi timorously extended his hand, and greatly emboldened to find it was not immediately snapped off, plied his strength, which, notwithstanding his age, was yet considerable, until Befo was safely lodged in the boat. The poor dog had scarce strength left to raise his head to his master's knee, but devoured his hand with caresses, while he sank trembling, panting, and powerless, into the bottom of the skiff.

“ Thus it is with the dog whom you call a tiger,” said Juan, in a moralizing mood, as he surveyed his faithful friend: “ Black or white, red or olive-hued, whom he once loves, he loves well. Happy or wretched, proud or lowly, it is all one: he asks not if his master be a villain. A tiger in courage, in strength, and vindictiveness, he is yet a lamb,—the fawn of a doe,—in the hands of his master. Feed him, he loves you—starve him, he loves you—beat him, still does he love you. Once gain his affection, and you cannot cast it off: the rich man cannot bribe his love with gold, and bread will not seduce him away;—nay, he will sometimes pine away on your grave. His name has been made a by-word for all that is base and villanous—I know not why, unless it is because, being the fondest and most confiding of living creatures, he is therefore the worst used: but the word is a satire upon our own injustice. Look at him, Techeechee, and

at me: I have been ever poor and well nigh friendless—I gave him to one who is as a prince among men: yet when he—his then master,—struck at me with his sword, this dog seized the weapon with his teeth; he came to me when I lay in prison, he sprang to me when I was dying in the lake, and he perilled his life, as thou hast seen, that he might have the poor privilege to follow me. I am a beggar and an outcast, a man degraded, and, it may be, soon outlawed:—yet does this poor creature love me none the less. Ay, Befo! it is all one to thee, what I am, and whither I go!”

To this eulogium, which the desolate youth pronounced with much feeling, Techeechee answered not a word; for though the expressions were Mexican, their purport was beyond his comprehension. He merely stared with much admiration upon the good understanding which seemed to exist between his companion and a creature that was in his eyes so terrific.

But the endearments mutually shared by two creatures of a race so different, and yet in heart so much alike, had the good effect to deprive him of many of his fears, so that he plied his paddle with good-will, and, the wind abating, rapidly shortened the distance that still divided them from the island city.

He had already put a wide sheet of water between him and the battle, and when the Indian fleet, beaten off, or satisfied with the mischief done, began to retreat, followed by such of the brigantines as were in plight to pursue, it was easy to preserve so much of the distance gained as to be beyond the reach of danger. The flash of a falconet occasionally burst dimly behind, its heavy roar startling back the breeze ; and sometimes a cannon ball came skipping over the surges close by. But, the wind being against the Spaniards, it was soon seen that there were left no Indians upon

whom to exercise their arms, unless such as had, in their consternation, lost sight of the dim beacon, and remained paddling about the lake at random.

CORTES, OR

CHAPTER XII

When morning broke over the lake, the voyagers were still at a longer's distance from the city. The wind had died away, the clouds parted in the heaven, and long before the sun-light transpired on the shores of Interoceanic, the morning-star was seen peeping over its summit. It made clear for a gently day, and Juan, despite his situation, which, truly one might say, was a every kind of very wretched, began to feel a sensation of pleasure as he perceived that the first of the day was about to dawn on the far continent, the

engaging themselves each moment from the rolling mists. Though the tops of the higher mountains of the east were visible, the lower borders of the lake in that quarter, as well as to the north and south, were yet concealed under vapours. In the west, however, the view was but little obstructed, and he could behold, distinctly enough, the dense masses of edifices, which covered the whole island of Mexico and many a broad acre of water around it. The huge pyramids, with their tower-like sanctuaries, rose proudly, as of yore, high above the surrounding buildings; the turrets and pinnacles, that crowned the royal palaces and the houses of nobles, still gleamed in the morning air; and, as he drew nigh, he could see the gardens of shrubs and flowers on the terraces, which gave to the whole city a look of verdure strange and beautiful to behold.

As soon as objects became distinct, Teoheechee observing that Juan's garments were yet dripping with wet, took from the prow of the

canoe a little bundle, from which he drew a broad, richly ornamented tilmaltli, or cloak, a *maxtlatl*, or cloth to wrap round the loins, sandals for the feet, fillets for the hair, and a fan of feathers to protect the eyes from sunshine. These he proffered to Juan, giving him to understand that he should forthwith doff his Christian weeds, and appear in the guise of a Mexican noble; telling him, at the same time, that they had been provided by Guatimozin, in anticipation of his deliverance. Yet neither remonstrance nor entreaty could prevail upon him to do more than throw off his reeking surcoat, and supply its place by the Indian cloak, which was of sufficient capacity, when folded about his person, almost to conceal his under attire, now in a great measure dried by the warmth of his body. This being accomplished to his satisfaction, Techeechee resumed his paddle, and fixing his eyes upon the imperial city, began to mumble, in an under voice, certain snatches of native airs,

which, both in quality and pitch, bore no little resemblance to the suppressed growlings, or rather the groaning of an imprisoned lion, and which, had Juan required any such testimony, would have proved how little his commerce with the Conquerors and his personal affection for himself, had withdrawn his heart from the people and the faith of Montezuma. As he advanced still nearer to the city, his air grew more confident, his tones more resolute and animated; and, by and by, without seeming to regard the presence of the young Spaniard, he launched boldly into a sort of national anthem, in which the military pride of the Mexicans was mingled with the gloom of their ferocious superstitions. The melody was rude and savage,—or rather it was no melody at all, but a chant or recitative, which was relieved from monotony only by the variations of emphasis, which became stronger and stronger, as the distance waxed less and less to the city. To express the words employed in any of the

metrical modes of civilized song, would be to rob the roundelay of its identity; for rhythm and melody were equally set at defiance;—at least, so it would have seemed to an ear accustomed only to the natural music of iambics and dactyls. We will therefore express them in unambitious prose, only premising that before the barbarian had proceeded far in the chant, the song was caught up and continued by the warriors in the fleet of canoes, now paddling out of the mists behind, and by many infidels who watched its approach from the shore, and from an island crag, strongly fortified, that lay a little to the east of the city.

“Mexitli Tetzauhteotl,* o-ah! o-ah!” thus sang the pagan,—“the son of the woman† of

* Mexitli, the Terrible God.

† Coatlicue, or Coatliquay, a religieuse, and sort of lady-abbess, of a mythic era. She was deified as the Goddess of Flowers.—A strange mother for such a son. But the Mexicans carried a sword in one hand, and a flower in the other.

Tula. "Mother, I will protect you."* The green plume is on his head, the wing of the eagle is on his leg, his forehead is blue like the firmament; he carries a spear and buckler, and with the fir-tree of Colhuacan,† he crushes the mountains. 'Mother, I will protect you.' Am not I the son of Mexico? and is not Mexico the daughter of Mexitli? O-ah, o-ah! Mexitli Tetzauhteotl!

"My father ate the heart of Xochimilco! Where was Painalton, the god of the swift foot, when the Miztecas ran to the mountains? 'Fast, warrior, fast!' said Painalton, brother of Mexitli. His foot-print is on the snows of Iztaccihuatl, and on the roof of Orizaba.‡ Tochtepec and Chinantla, Matlatzinco and Oaxaca, they shook under his feet, as the hills

* The words of the god, yet unborn, when the life of Coatlicue was threatened by her *human* children.

† The Hunchbacked Mountain, on the sides of which the Mexicans won their first recorded victory.

‡ *Pojautecatl*, in Mexican.

shake, when Mictlanteuctli, king of hell, groans in the caverns. So my father killed the men of the south, the men of the east and west, and Mexitli shook the fir-tree with joy, and Painalton danced by night among the stars.

“Where is the end of Mexico? It begins in Huehueta

llan in the north, and who knows the place of Huehueta

llan?”* In the south, it sees the lands of crocodiles and vultures,—the bog and the rock, where man cannot live. The sea washes it on the east, the sea washes it on the west, and that is the end—Who has looked to the end of the waters? It is the land of blossoms,—the land of the tiger-flower, and the cactus-bud that opens at night

* Huehueta

llan, was the name of the unknown land, from which came all the hordes of Toltecs and Aztecs. One remarkable circumstance connected with the famous ruined city near to Palenque in Guatemala, seems to have escaped the theorists. It is said that the Indians call this city by the name of Huehueta

llan. It is far to the *south* of Mexico.

like a star,—of the flower-of-the-dead,* that ghosts come to snuff at, and of the hand-flower,† which our gods planted among the hills. It is a land dear to Mexitli.

“Who were the enemies of Mexico? Their heads are in the walls of the House of Skulls, and the little child strikes them, as he goes by, with a twig. Once, Mexico was a bog of reeds, and Mexitli slept on a couch of bulrushes: our god sits now on a world of gold, and the world is Mexico. Will any one fight me? I am a Mexican.—Mexitli is the god of the brave. Our city is fair on the island, and Mexitli sleeps with us. When he calls me in the morning, I grasp the quiver,—the quiver and the axe; and I am not afraid. When he winds his horn from the temple, I know that he is my father, and that he looks at me, while I fight.

* The Dahlia.

† *Arbol de las Manitas*—the marvellous tree, of which, besides that in the present Botanic Garden, there are supposed to be but two more specimens in the land, unless known only to the Indians.

Sound the horn of battle, for I see the spear of a foe! Mexitli Tetzauteotl, we are the men of Mexico!"

With such roundelays as these, echoed at a distance by the rowers in the fleet and by many barbarians from the buildings that projected into the lake, Techeechee urged the light canoe through a sluice in the northern dike, and approached that long neck or peninsula, once the island of Tlatelolco, but long since united to that of Tenochtitlan, which gave its name to the fifth quarter of the city, and, as it afterwards appeared, was the site of the noblest of the many palaces, built at different periods, by the kings of Mexico. A large portion of the peninsula, midway between its extremity and the ancient bank of the island of Tenochtitlan, was occupied by a garden, divided from the lake by a wall lofty enough to secure it against the assault of a foe, and yet sufficiently low to expose to the eye of a spectator on the lake, the rich luxuriance of groves, among whose waving

boughs could be traced the outlines of a spacious edifice, profusely decorated with turrets and observatories, some of which were of great height and singular structure.

Against this wall, through a fleet of fishing canoes, now paddling out into the lake, Techee-ohce seemed to direct the little skiff, much to Juan's surprise, until, having drawn nigher, he perceived that it was perforated by several gateways or sallyports, very low, and evidently designed to give entrance only to the humble vessels which composed the Mexican navy. The largest was wide enough to admit two or three of the largest piraguas abreast, and the smaller ones seemed intended only for the private gondolas of the royal family. All were defended by stout wickets, which, as Juan soon perceived, were raised and let fall from within, somewhat in the manner of a portcullis.

The tranquillity that seemed to reign within this sanctified recess, betrayed at once its royal character. In every other quarter of the city,

as he passed it, Juan could hear a roaring hum, as if proceeding from a vast multitude, pent within the narrow island,—as was indeed the case, the whole military strength of the empire being concentrated within the limits of the island and the shore-cities that commanded the causeways. But here all was a profound calm, broken only by the songs of birds, and, occasionally, by what seemed the cry of some tamed and domesticated beast of prey.

As Techeechee urged the canoe towards one of the smaller gateways, Juan beheld the wicket ascend from the water, but without seeing by whom or in what manner, it was raised. An instant after, he was on the very point of entering the narrow chasm, perhaps never more to re-pass it. He turned his back again to the lake, and strove to discover the dim lines and masses of shore and city, palace and pyramid, among which he had so lately dwelt in sorrow and confinement. The mists were nearly dispersed, and the sky was clear; but the fiery

track of the rising sun over the lake, dazzled his eyes, and, with a veil of radiance, hid the towers of Tezcucó. He caught an indistinct view of two or three brigantines, becalmed at a distance from the shore, which they were endeavouring to regain by the force of oars; but the city of Acolhuacanese was no longer visible: and by and by, the whole prospect of the lake was shut out by the garden wall, under which he had passed. He had scarce turned away his eyes, when the wicket sunk, with a plunge, into the water. He looked back: but those who had loosed it, were already hidden among the shrubbery. It seemed as if the falling of that portal had shut him out for ever from the society of his countrymen. His companions were now to be found among the uncivilized and the godless.

A narrow canal, bordered with banks of flowers, conducted the canoe from the gateway to a little stone basin, planted round with trees, at the roots of which were placed carved

blocks of stone, as if designed for seats. Here Techeechee sprang ashore, followed by Juan and Befe, the latter now completely refreshed, and, though evidently somewhat surprised, and even daunted, by the novelty of his situation, without showing any symptoms of having repented his change of masters.

"The Great Eagle is in the house of the king, his brother," said the Ottomí, "and his enemies cannot reach him,—no, not even if they were the Tlatoani of the great city. Sit down then, and be at peace; for presently the king will come from the lake, and speak to his brother. Techeechee will go to the wall, and look out. The big tiger,—the dog,—Pepo." He had already acquired the dog's name, or as near an approach to it as his organs could overmaster, and was not a little pleased, when the animal, raising his head at the sound, stalked amicably towards him, rubbing his nose against him in token of good-will. "Pepo! amigo, friend, good rascal!" he said, affectionately.

but not without some nervousness — “very pretty Pepo, Techeechee’s brother. Guatimozin is the Young Eagle’s brother; Techeechee will be Pepo’s!” Then, Befo having returned to Juan, he continued, “Let not Pepo roam through the garden; the watchmen on the walls would think him a tiger escaped from his cage, and shoot him with arrows. This is the Pool of the Full Moon: here the king will come to his brother.”

So saying, Techeechee glided away through the shrubbery, and was presently seen ascending the wall, by certain steep steps constructed for the purpose, up to a ledge, undoubtedly prepared to give footing to defenders, from which he could overlook the outer parapet, and enjoy an extensive view of the lake.

And now the outcast Juan, after giving way, for a few moments, to a grief that was the stronger perhaps, from the opportunity thus offered of indulging it in secret, began gradually to be moved by other feelings, in which curi-

osity soon became predominant; and looking about him, he beheld with his own eyes an example of the strange and barbaric magnificence which characterized the royal gardens of Anahuac.

The sun was already high in the east, and the last rain-drop was exhaling from the leaf. The sky was cloudless, the waters were at rest. It was such a day as lent beauty to objects not in themselves fair; and to the green brilliance of foliage and the harmonious hues of flowers it imparted a loveliness as dear to the imagination as the senses. It was the spring time, too, the season of Nature's triumph and rejoicing.

The Pool of the Full Moon, as Techecuhsee had called it, doubtless from its circular shape, and its diminutive size, was surrounded by a wall of trees as dense as that which enclosed the memorable pond in the garden of Tescuco. But besides the addition of the stone seats and basin, it was ornamented with banks of the richest flowers, behind which rose a thick

getting of shrubbery; and from the branches of the trees hung rich tufts and festoons of that gray moss—the Barba de España, which gives an air of such indescribable solemnity to the forests of the lower Mississippi. A few little birds warbled among the boughs, and the field-sparrow chirped in the bushes. In other respects the place was silent and wholly solitary; and as its green walls shut out almost altogether the spectacles disclosed from other places, Juan left it, after seeing that Techeeshee maintained his stand on the wall, as if the fleet were still at a distance.

He now perceived that the garden, though very beautiful, was a labyrinth, or rather, as it seemed, a wilderness of groves, glades, and fountains, some of which last burst from mounds of stone, that were the pedestals of rude and fantastic statues, perhaps idols, and some spouted up into the air, from the mouths of porphyry serpents and dragons, as if the

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science of hydraulics had already begun to dawn upon the minds of the Mexican artisans. The noblest cypresses rose over the humblest vine, and many a convolvulus rolled its cataract of flowers over the tops of lesser trees, and many an aloe, from a vast pyramid of leaves, reared up its lofty pillar, crowned with a yellow canopy of blossoms. All the splendour of the vegetable world known to Anahuac, found its place in this magnificent retreat: and the plants of the lower zones, and even the palms of the coast, had been made to thrive side by side with those productions which were natural to the elevated valley.

Besides these ornaments and a thousand similar, the animal kingdom was made to add a charm, and, as it soon appeared, a horror to the royal garden; for Juan had no sooner left the pool, than he beheld, besides a thousand birds of every dye among the trees, some half dozen deer frisking over the glades, and heard

at but a little distance the roar of fiercer animals, such as came to his ears, while he was yet on the lake.

At a sound so hostile, Befo bristled and uttered a low bark, as if to apprise his master of the presence of danger; but Juan knew enough of the habits of the Mexican kings to understand that their gardens, besides enclosing all that was beautiful among plants, contained also aviaries and menageries, in which were collected the birds and beasts of their empire; —in other words, they were Zoological Gardens, such as the advance of science is now establishing in the countries of Europe. A little fawn, feeding hard by, started with more terror at this unusual cry of Befo, than at any of the howls to which it had been long accustomed, and ran timidly away. As it fled, Juan remarked, that its neck was encircled by a chaplet of flowers, as if lately put on by some caressing hand.

At this sight a new impulse seemed to seize

the youth. He faltered, hesitated, cast his eye to the wall, on which Teeheechee was yet standing, and then marking the quarter whither the little animal had fled, he beckoned to Beto to take post at his heels, and immediately followed.

He soon found himself among a maze of copses, among which were scattered divers cages or baskets, of great strength, secured to the trunks of trees, and little paddocks equally strong, each containing some ferocious or untameable beast, many of them brought from the most distant provinces. Thus he beheld—besides an abundant display of pumas or mitzlis, (the maneless lion,) jaguars, wolves, ounces, and wild dogs—the bison of Chihuahua staggering in his pen, the antelope or pronghorn of the north, and even the great bear from the ridges of the Oregon or Rocky Mountains. The tapir of Guatemala rolled by his fenny pool, and the peccary herded hard by. Here were apes, ant-eaters, porcupines,

and a thousand other animals; and among them, imprisoned with the same jealous care, in suitable cages, were the reptiles of the country—lizards and adders, and all the family of the *Crotalus*, from the common rattlesnake of America to that frightful one of Mexico and South America, which has been distinguished as especially the Horrid. Here was the phosphorescent *cencoatl*, whose path through the bushes and grass by night is said to be indicated by the gleaming light of his body; the *tlilcoa*, or great black serpent of the mountains, and the still more formidable and gigantic *cazauhcoatl*, or Boa-Constrictor, which, like his neighbour, the cayman or crocodile, from the same boiling fens of the coast, made his prey upon the largest stags, and even human beings. With these were many smaller snakes, distinguished for their beauty, and sometimes their docility, some of which latter, entirely harmless, were allowed to crawl about at liberty.

It would require a book by itself to particularize and describe all the members of this fearful convocation of monsters; of which it was afterwards written by Bernal Diaz, that when the beasts and reptiles were provoked and irritated, so as to howl and hiss together, 'the palace seemed like hell itself.' It is very certain that Befo lost much of his dignity of carriage at the mere sight of such assembled terrors, creeping along reluctantly, and with draggling tail; and Juan himself was not without some sensations of alarm, as he found himself now startled by the growl of an angry mitzli, now perturbed by the sudden rustling of a boa among the dried reeds of his couch. The rattlesnakes shook their castanets at his approach, the cayman tumbled, with a sudden plunge, into his muddy pool, the wolf showed his sharp teeth, and the ape darted towards him from the tree, with a wild, chattering, and half hostile scream. But he had remarked that the little fawn directed its course imme-

diately through the thickest of the assemblage, and if that circumstance did not convince him of the safety of the path, he was certainly ashamed to show less courage than the young of a doe. He therefore trudged onwards, and in a few moments, exchanged the scene for one less frightful, though not less striking.

He was now among the birds of Mexico. A grove—it might have seemed a forest—of lofty trees, was covered over with a curious contrivance of nets, some of which were confined to their tops, while others were made to surround the shrubbery at their roots, in all which were confined the noisy prisoners.—Other nets were flung over little pools, whose banks and surface were enlivened by the presence of water-fowl. In some places cages were hung upon the trees, containing the more precious or unmanageable captives. Through this grove one might penetrate in all conceivable directions, and seem to be confined along

with its feathered inhabitants, and yet be really separated from them by the nets.

The outer portion or border of the grove was devoted to the endless tribe of parrots, whose magnificent colours gave a beauty to the tree tops, not to be lessened even by the horrid clamour of their voices. The singing birds were confined within the silent recesses of its centre.

If curiosity and a mere love of barbarous display, without other motive, had collected together in the gardens of Mexico her beasts and reptiles, utility had some little influence in the selection of her birds. Their feathers were devoted to a thousand purposes of ornament, and among others, to the construction of those very singular Mosaic works, or pictures, which have won the admiration even of European painters and virtuosos. But while thus providing for the supply of one of the most elegant of wants, the Mexican kings secured to themselves the

means of adding the loveliest and most natural feature to their gardens. It would be impossible to convey any just idea of the splendid creatures that went wandering and leaping, like sunbeams, among the leaves and over the grass. Eagles and kites sat on the trees, and storks, herons, and flamingos, stalked through the pools. Here the macaw flashed, screaming, through the boughs; there the wood-pigeon sat cooing by his mate. The little *madrugador*, or early riser, the happiest of his species, who chirps up his companions, when the morning star peeps from the horizon, repeated his jovial note; the white-sparrow, the calandra, the cardinal, the sable-and-golden oriole, and the little spotted tiger-bird, added their charming voices; and the centzontli, or mocking-bird, as it is trivially called, for it is worthy of a name much more poetical and dignified, whistled and sang with such a power and variety of melody, as left all other songsters in the back ground. The little *chupa-rosas*,—rose-pickers, or humming-

birds,—darted about from blossom to blossom, needing and acknowledging no bonds save those of attachment to their favourite flowers.

Through this delightful grove Juan stepped, enchanted with its music; and following a pleasant path, over which there echoed no notes louder than those of the little wood-pigeon, such as the traveller yet hears cooing in the copse that surmounts the mouldered pyramid of Cholula, he was soon introduced to a spectacle more striking, more lovely, and to him far more captivating than any he had yet beheld.

CHAPTER XII.

In a green nook, exceedingly sequestered and peculiarly beautified by banks of the richest flowers, were five Indian maidens, three of whom danced under the trees on the smooth grass, to the sound of a little pipe or flute, that was played by a fourth. The other, half kneeling, reclined hard by, fastening a chaplet of flowers round the neck of a fawn, younger and tamer than that which had fled from Befo, and which was now seen frisking uneasily, or perhaps jealously about its companion.

Young, pretty, and robed with such simplicity

as might have become the Hamadryads of Thessaly, revelling around the green oaks with which their fate was so inseparably connected, the dancers might indeed have been esteemed nymphs of the wood, as they moved gracefully and a-tiptoe over the velvet grass, all unconscious of the presence of any person or anything to make them afraid. Their naked feet and arms glimmered with ornaments of gold and native rubies; and the white *cueitl*, or *eymar*, with a peculiar vest or jacket of brilliant colours, while allowing unrestrained motion to their limbs, gave almost a classic and statuary beauty to their figures. The youthful musician leaned against a tree, pleasantly absorbed in the melody she was drawing from the pipe; while the fifth maiden, for whose amusement the diversion was obviously continued, was too much occupied with the pet animal, whose ambition seemed rather to be to browse upon the chaplet than to wear it,—to give much attention to either the dance or the roundelay.

The whole scene was one of enchanting innocence and repose ; and even Befo, who was wont to indicate the presence of a stranger with a growl, betrayed no token of dissatisfaction, so that Juan stood for a little time gazing on, entirely unseen. His looks were fastened upon her to whom the musician and the dancers were but attendants, and who, from other circumstances, had a stronger claim on his regard.

In her he beheld the young infidel, whose influence over his mind, operating upon it only for good, had altered the whole current of his fortunes, and changed what had once seemed a destiny of aggrandisement and renown, into a career of suffering and contumely. He was now in the presence of one, for whom he had incurred the hatred of a vindictive rival (for all his miseries were dated from the period of his quarrel with Guzman), for whose sake he had refused the intercession, and spurned the affection, of the still more unhappy Magdalena ; and

for whom he now thought that even the last and greatest of his griefs, his exile from Christian companionship, was a happiness, since it promised her the inestimable gift of a faith, which he would have gladly purchased her with his life. How far a barbarian and the daughter of a barbarian was worthy of, and capable of inspiring, an affection so romantic and so noble, we must inquire of our hearts, rather than our reason.

She was of that age which, in our northern climes would have constituted her a girl, but which, in a tropical region, entitled her to the name of woman. Her figure was neither mean nor low, but of such exquisite proportions as, in these days of voluntary degeneration, are seldom found except among the children of nature. Her skin was, for her race, wonderfully fair; and yet there were, even among the men of Mexico, skins much lighter than those of some of the Spaniards, of which Guatimozin was a famous example. Her dress was similar

in fashion to that of the other damsels, but consisted of many more garments, according to the mode of the very wealthy and noble maidens, who were accustomed to wear one cueitl over another, each successive one being shorter than the preceding, so that the borders of each could be distinguished. Thus, when they were of different colours, as was often the case, the whole figure, from the ankles to the waist, seemed enveloped in one voluminous garment, distinguished by broad horizontal stripes, exceedingly gay and brilliant. The colours upon the garments of this maiden were of a more modest character, and richness was given to them rather by borders singularly embroidered in gold and gems, than by any splendour of tints. A little vest or bodice of very peculiar fancy was worn over the shoulders and bosom, secured by a girdle that might have been called a chain, since it was composed of links of gold. Her arms were bare like the others', and her feet, not entirely naked, as was the case with

the rest, were protected by a sort of pretty shoes, too complete to be called sandals, and yet too low to be mocasins. With this graceful figure, was a face singularly sweet and even beautiful, with eyes so broad, so large, so dark, so lustrously mild and saintlike in expression, that they rivalled those of the young fawn she was caressing, and perhaps, more than the trivial circumstance presently to be mentioned, had contributed to obtain for her a name, by which her countrymen seemed to compare her to the lights of heaven. Among the gold ornaments and gems of emerald and ruby, with which her hair was interwoven in braids, was a large jewel of pearls, the rarest, and therefore the most precious, of trinkets in Tenochtitlan. It was in the form of a star, to which it bore as much resemblance among the sable midnight of her hair, as does the snowy blossom of the great Magnolia amid the dusky obscurity of its evergreen boughs.

Upon this vision Juan could have gazed for

hours; but the fawn which he had followed to the retreat, perceiving the formidable Befo so close at hand, bleated out a hasty alarm, and thus directed upon him the eyes of the whole party. The dance and the music ceased; the maidens screamed, and would have fled, but for the sense of duty which constrained them to await the bidding of their mistress. She, though much alarmed at the sight of neighbours so unexpected, yet mingled with her terror feelings which kept her chained to the spot, while the attendants clustered around her, confused, and anxious to fly.

As soon as Juan perceived the alarm of the party, and saw the eyes of the princess directed upon him, he bent a knee half to the earth, as if in the presence of a princess of Christendom, saying gently,

“I am Juan Lerma, a Castilian—an exile from the Spanish camp, entreating welcome from my enemies, and yet am no enemy. Fear me not, daughter of Montezuma; and fear

not this animal, who shall be to thee as harmless as the young fawns."

At these words, pronounced in their own tongue, and with a voice so mild and conciliating, the maidens recovered somewhat from their fright, and assuming at once an air characteristically sedate, cast their eyes upon the earth, while the young princess stood regarding Juan, with a countenance indicative of many changing emotions. Seeing, when he had finished, that he preserved an attitude of submissive respect and expectation, she stepped timidly forward, and presenting him the garland which she had failed to secure around the neck of the favorite, said artlessly, and yet with both dignity and decision,

"The king is the Great Eagle's friend; the daughter of Montezuma is his bondmaid—she is welcome to Mexico. I remember the friendliness of Montezuma my father,—I remember the good will of the Christian.—He is welcome." and

Then putting the chaplet into his hand, and

taking this into her own, with a confidence that was perhaps as much the result of unsophisticated feelings as of peculiar customs, she touched it with her forehead,—indicating by her words, her gift, and her act of ceremonious salutation, that, with her welcome, she confessed the obligation of friendship and gratitude for acts of past kindness.

“I will wear the garland upon my breast,” said Juan, with a look of purer satisfaction than he had shown for many long days; “and if heaven grant me fulfilment of the hope that is nearest to my heart, I will wear it there for ever. Noble and lovely maiden, I am here by the will of Guatimozin,—I know not well for what purpose, nor how long I shall be suffered to remain in your presence. This, at least, is certain: the dark day of war has arisen, and this happy garden may soon become a theatre of fierce contention, in which the fairest and the best may perish at the same hour with the

worst. Let not that day find Zelahualla without the Christian cross on her bosom."

"Gustimozin will drive the wicked from the land," said Zelahualla, mildly. "Has my lord the Great Eagle forsaken his wicked people, and will he yet cling to their gods? After a time, Centeotl, the mother of heaven and the earth, will prevail over Mexitli, and redeem men from sorrow: then will men bleed no more on the pyramids, but flowers and fruits will be the only sacrifices demanded by heaven. How is it with the gods of Spain? do they not call for victims for ever? The gods of our land are more just and merciful."

"Alas," said Juan, "this is a delusion brought upon you by our sinful acts, not by any defects of our holy religion. Know, Zelahualla, that there are no gods but ~~one~~ and He is both just and merciful—the god alike of the heathen and the Christian. But of this I will not speak to you now; though per-

haps some day I may be permitted to speak to you more fully.

haps I may never have opportunity to speak again. If death should come upon you suddenly, call then, in that grievous hour, upon the name of the Christian's God, and he will not refuse to hear you, who are in ignorance, and therefore sinless. And wear upon your neck this cross, given to me by one who was a beloved friend." (It was the gift of Magdalena.) "Look upon it with reverence, and heaven may vouchsafe a miracle in your favour. Let it not be forgotten, when danger comes to you."

The spirit of the Propaganda had infected the minds of all the Spaniards in America. The ambition of conversion was inseparably linked with that of conquest; and on all occasions, except those of actual battle, the rage of making proselytes was uppermost in the minds of many. This was undoubtedly fanaticism, and, in the case of the fierce and avaricious, it developed itself with all the odious features of superstition. With a few of more gentle and

kindly natures, it was a nobler and more-benignant passion. While others sought proselytes for the glory of the church, these thought only of doing good to man. The best, the most enthusiastic and successful missionaries, were those whose efforts were prompted by affection. The first impulse, therefore, of Juan, who had long since felt and cherished, even among distant deserts, a strong interest in the fate of this young princess, was to secure to her the blessings of salvation, which his religious instruction could not lead him to hope for any one dying in unbelief. It was a consequence and evidence of affection ; but a still stronger proof was given, when he drew from his breast a little silver cross, which, up to this moment, he had treasured with the most jealous regard, and proffered it to Zelahualla. It was, as has been mentioned, the gift of Magdalena, presented before the evil acts of Hilario and Villafana had interrupted the affection fast ripening in Juan's heart, and accepted because it possessed

little value beyond that imputed by consecration and superstition. It was, indeed, as Magdalena had told him, the gift of her deceased mother, and she had always been taught to believe it possessed some of the extraordinary virtues of a talisman. In these virtues Juan was sufficiently benighted to believe; and it was perhaps for this reason, rather than from any grateful memory of the giver, that he had from that day worn it in secret upon his bosom, so that it had even escaped the hands of his gaolers in Mechoacan, and from the eyes of his Spanish companions. It was a proof of the pure and disinterested nature of his regard for the Indian princess, as well as of his reliance upon its heavenly protection, that he could rob himself of a relic so prized, in order that its presence might secure to her the benefits of a belief she neither understood nor professed.

If such were his own superstition, it could not be supposed that Zelahualla's was less in

degree. On the contrary, she received the humble trinket with a look of respect as well as gratitude, saying with the greatest simplicity,

"What the Great Eagle loves must be good, and Zelahualla will listen when his god speaks to her."

"Is it possible," thought Juan, while flinging the chain of silver beads by which it was secured round his neck, "that a creature so beautiful and so good—so pure, so innocent, so lovely to the eye and the thought—should be really a pagan and barbarian?"

The question was indeed natural enough. A sweeter impersonation of beauty both mental and corporeal, could scarcely be imagined; and the light of her eyes was so mild and seraphic, that one might wonder whence it came, if not from the operation of that divine belief, which chases from the heart the impurer traits of nature.

What further thoughts might have crowded

into Juan's breast, and what might have been the conclusion of an interview so interesting, it is not necessary to imagine. While he was yet securing the chain around the bended neck of the princess, a step, previously heralded by the growl of Befo, rang upon the walk, and the Lord of Death, followed at a little distance by Techeechee, stalked into the covert, arrayed in all the Mexican panoply of war and knighthood. Instead of a tunic of cotton cloth or other woven material, he wore, doubtless over some stronger protection, a sort of hauberk of dressed tiger's skin, fitting tight to his massive chest, and bordered by a skirt of long feathers, reaching nearly to his knees. On his head was a helmet or cap which had once adorned the skull of the same ferocious animal, the teeth and ears flapping about his temples, and the skin of the legs, with the talons remaining, hanging at the sides over his shoulders and breast, waving about in connexion with his long black locks and the scarlet tufts among them. His

shield of stout cane-work, painted, and ornamented with a long waving penacho of feathers, hung at his back, and a macana of gigantic size swung from his wrist. His legs were swathed, merry-andrew-wise, with ribands of scarlet and gilded leather, that seemed to begin at his sandals; and his arms, otherwise naked, were ornamented up to the elbow in a similar way. On the whole, his appearance was highly formidable and impressive, and not the less so that many marks of blood, crusted about his person, as well as divers rents in his spotted hauberk, told how recently and how valiantly he had borne his part in the terrors of conflict.

As he entered the covert, his step was bold, springy, and majestic, such as belongs to the native American warrior, when he treads the prairie and the mountain, beyond the ken of the white man. It happened that his ear being struck by the growl of Befo, his attention was not immediately directed to the princess

and her companion ; but, seeing the dog, and conceiving at once, though not without surprise, the cause of his presence, he turned round in search of his master, and beheld him engaged securing the relic around the neck of the daughter of Montezuma.

At this sight, his countenance changed from the haughty joy of a soldier, and darkened with gloom and displeasure. He even grasped his macana, and took a stride towards the pair, who were unconscious of his intrusion, until Befo made it evident by a louder growl, and by taking a stand, ready to dispute the warrior's right of approach.

The person of the Lord of Death was at first unknown to Juan ; but he beheld enough in his visage to convince him it was not that of a friend. Still, he knew too much of the almost slavish reverence with which even the highest nobles regarded their king and the child of a king, to apprehend any danger from the warrior's wrath. In this belief he was justified by

the act of the barbarian, who, perceiving Zelahualla look towards him with surprise, released the weapon from his grasp, and sinking into the lowest obeisance of humility, kissed the earth at her feet. Then rising and surveying her with a melancholy, but deeply respectful look, he said,

“What am I but a slave before the daughter of Montezuma? The young man of the east is the king’s brother. I speak the words of Guatimozin: ‘My brother shall look to-day upon the king of Mexico, with the crown upon his head, at the rock of Chapoltepec, among the people.’ These are the words of the king. Shall the king’s brother obey the king?”

“Doth Guatimozin call the Eagle his brother?” exclaimed Zelahualla, with a look of the greatest satisfaction. “Then shall no evil befall him among the people. Let my lord the Christian and Great Eagle depart, and fear not; for the men of Mexico know that he was good to the king and the king’s daughter, when the

king was a captive; and therefore Zelahualia will remember what he says of the god of the silver cross."

Thus summoned, and thus dismissed, Juan withdrew his eyes from the beaming and singularly engaging countenance of the maiden, and looked to the Lord of Death, as if to signify his readiness to depart. But the Lord of Death seemed for a moment to have lost his powers of locomotion. He remained gazing upon the princess with an aspect increasing in gloom, and once or twice seemed as if he would have spoken something in anger and reprehension. Yet deterred by the divinity of royalty that hedged about her, or more probably by the divinity of her beauty, he roused up at last, and, after making another deep reverence, which was as if a lion had bowed down at the feet of a doe, he strode away without speaking, followed by Juan and Techeechee.

From Techeechee Juan learned what he had in part gathered from the obscure expressions

of the noble: He was summoned to witness the coronation of the young king in form before the assembled Mexicans, on the consecrated hill of Chapoltepec, on which occasion he was to be honoured and his person made sacred, by the king bestowing on him the title of friend and brother.

The path led Juan as before through the royal menagerie; and while passing among the wild beasts, Techeechee signified to the Christian that the presence of Befo among the Mexicans would subject him to much difficulty, if not danger; and would certainly, the moment he was seen, produce a confusion in the assemblage, indecorous to the occasion, and highly displeasing to the king and the Mexican dignitaries. To this Juan justly assented, and not knowing in what other manner he could dispose of his faithful attendant, he agreed, at Techeechee's suggestion, to confine him in one of the several empty cages, wherein he was

assured and believed, he would remain in safety. This being accomplished, and not without trouble, he endeavoured with caresses to reconcile the animal to his novel imprisonment, and then left him.

He found the Lord of Death at the pool, with a piragua, very singularly carved and ornamented, in which were six Mexicans, known at once by their dress to be warriors of established reputation, the rules of Mexican chivalry not allowing any soldier, even the son of the king, to wear, in time of war, any but the plainest white garment, until he had accomplished deeds worthy of distinction. These were arrayed in escaupil, variously ornamented with plumes and gilded leather ; they had war-clubs and quivers, and their appearance was both martial and picturesque.

At a signal from Masquazateuctli, they seized their paddles and began to urge the piragua towards the water-gate of the wall, and Techee-

chee leaping into the little canoe, Juan prepared to follow after him. He was arrested by the Lord of Death, who touched his arm, though not rudely, and looking into his face for awhile, with an expression in which anger seemed to struggle with melancholy, said,

“The Great Eagle is the brother of Guatimozin,—Masquazateuctli is but his slave. Where would the king’s brother have been this day, had the king not taken him from the prison-house?”

“In heaven, if it becomes me to say so—certainly, at least, in the grave,” replied Juan, in some surprise. “In this capture, or this rescue, as I may call it the king will bear witness I did not myself concur; for such concurrence I esteemed unbecoming my state as a Christian and Spaniard. Yet I am not the less grateful to Guatimozin, and I acknowledge he has given me a life.”

“It was a good thing of the king,” said the barbarian; “but what is this? Are you a Spaniard in Mexico, and alive? neither upon the block of the pyramid, nor in the cage at the temple-yard? The king feeds you in his house, he gives you water from his fountain, and robes from his bed,—he takes you by his side, and, among his people, he says, ‘This man is my brother; therefore look upon him with love.’ Is not this good also of the king?”

“It is,” replied Juan gravely; “and I need not be instructed, that it becomes me to be grateful, even by a warrior so renowned and noble as the Lord of Death.”

The eyes of the barbarian sparkled with a fierce fire while he continued,—

“What then should you look for in Mexico, but shelter and food?—a house to hide you from the angry men of Spain, and bread to eat in your hiding-place? Where

are the quiver and the macana? Will the king's brother fight the king's enemies?"

"If they be my countrymen, the Spaniards, *no*," replied Juan, with great resolution, yet not without uneasiness; for he read in the question, an early attempt to seduce him into apostacy. "I am the king's guest,—his prisoner, if he will,—his victim, if it must be,—but not his soldier."

"Hearken then to me," said the Indian, with a stern and magisterial voice: "The king is the lord of the valley, the master of men's lives, and the beloved of Mexico; but he has not the heart of the old man gray with wisdom, and he knows not the guile of the stranger. Why should his brother do him a wrong? The king thinks his brother a green snake from the corn-fields to play with;* but he has the teeth of the rattling adder!"

* The Mexicans were accustomed to tame and domesticate certain harmless reptiles

“ Mexican !” said Juan, indignantly, “ these words from the mouth of a Spaniard, would be terms of mortal injury ; and infidel though you be, yet you must know, they bear the sting of insult. What warrior art thou that canst abuse the helplessness of a captive, and do wrong to an unarmed man ?”

“ Do I wrong thee then ?” replied the Lord of Death grimly. “ Lo, thou art here safe from thy bitter hearted people, and wilt not even repay the goodness of the king by striking the necks of his enemies, who are also thine ! Is not this enough ? Put upon thee the weeds of a woman, and go sleep in the garden of birds, afar from danger,—yet call not the birds down from the tree ; hide thee in the bush of flowers, yet pluck not the flowers from the stem. Let the guest remember he is a guest, and steal not from the house that gives him shel-

ter.—Does the king's brother understand the words of the king's slave?"

"I do not," said Juan with a frown.
"They are the words of a dreamer;—" and he would have passed on towards the canoe, which he now perceived was waiting him near the wicket, but that the Lord of Death again arrested him.

"The king is good," he said with deep and meaning accents, "but the wrong-doer shall not escape. Perhaps"—and here he softened the severity of his speech, and even assumed a look of friendly interest,— "perhaps the Great Eagle has left his best friend among the fighting men of Tezcucó? Let him be patient for a little, and his friend shall be given to him."

"You speak to me in riddles," replied Juan impatiently. "Let us begone."

The Mexican gave the youth a look of the darkest and most menacing character,

and uttering the figurative name which Guatimozin had already applied to the princess, said,

“The Centzontli is the daughter of Montezuma,—the bird that is not to be called from the tree, the flower that is not to be pulled from the stem.—The king is good to his brother; but Mexico is not a dog, that the Spaniard should steal away the daughter of heaven.”

Then, clutching his war-axe, as if to give more emphasis to his warning, the nature of which was no longer to be mistaken, he gave the young man one more look, exceedingly black and threatening, and strode rapidly away. The next moment he leaped, with the activity of a mountain-cat, into the piragua, and speaking but a word to the rowers, was instantly paddled into the lake.

Juan followed, not a little troubled and

displeased by the complexion and tone of the menace, and stepping into the canoe was soon impelled from the garden. He perceived the piragua floating hard by, and the Lord of Death standing erect among the rowers. As soon as the canoe drew nigh, the warrior-noble made certain gestures to Techeechee, signifying that he should conduct the youth on the voyage alone. Then giving a sign to his attendants, the prow of the piragua was turned towards the east, and, much to the surprise of Juan, and not a little even to that of the Ottomi, was urged in that direction with the most furious speed. As they started, the rowers set up a yell, as if animated by the prospect of some stirring and adventurous exploit.

Techeechee gazed after them for a moment, and then handling his paddle, he directed the canoe round the point of Tlatelolco, and was soon lost among a multi-

tude of similar vessels, all proceeding to the south-west in the direction of the hill of Chapoltepec.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE review, division, and minute organization of the vast army now at the disposal of the Captain-General, occupied nearly the whole day, which was unexpectedly propitious, as the rainy season might be said to have already commenced. Clouds, indeed, gathered over the sky in the afternoon, giving a melancholy aspect to the hills and meadows; and a thick fog rose from the lake and spread around, until it had pervaded the lower grounds on its borders. Yet not a drop of rain fell during the

whole day, and by sunset the clouds dispersed, without having disturbed the firmament with thunder; and the lake was left to glimmer in the light of a young moon, and the multitude of stars.

The whole native population of Tezcuco had been drawn to the meadows, to witness the glories of military parade, and the city was deserted and solitary. Nay, even the watchmen on the walls, forgetting the audacious assault of the past night, and anxious to share a spectacle from which their duties should have separated them, stole, one after another, from their posts, until the northern gates were left wholly unguarded. The vanity of the Commander-in-Chief could not permit the absence of a single effective Spaniard from the scene of display, and the walls had been left to Tlascalans.

Late in the afternoon, and when the mists were thickest, and the hues of the fields most mournful, a single individual passed from that

gate at which Juan Lerma, eight or nine weeks before, had terminated the first chapter of his exile. A friar's cassock and cowl enveloped his whole form, yet the dullest eye would have detected in the vigour and impetuosity of his step, the presence of passions which could not belong to the holy profession. His eye was fixed upon a shadowy figure, almost lost among the mists that went staggering along, as if upon a course not yet defined, or over paths difficult to be traced; and while he was obviously watching and pursuing the retreating shape, it seemed to be with a confidence that feared not the observation of the fugitive. Thus, when the figure paused, he arrested his steps, and resumed them only when they were resumed by the other; and, in this manner, he followed onwards, with little precaution, until Tezcuco was left far behind, hidden in the fog. As he moved, he muttered many expressions, indicative of a deeply disturbed and even remorseful mind.

"All this have *I* done," he exclaimed, bitterly, and almost wildly. "Mine own sin, though black as the soot of perdition, is stained a triple dye by the malefactions it has caused in others—*Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!*—Cursed avarice! cursed ambition! There is a retribution that follows us even to the grave; sin is punished with sin,—the first fault lays fire to the train of our vices, and in their explosions we are further stained,—punished, destroyed. That sin! and what has come of it? Where is the gain to balance it? Cajoled by the demon that seduced me, cheated and flung aside—suspected, degraded, demoralized—a wanderer, a villain, a cur—the friend of rogues, and myself their fittest fellow—Heaven is strong, and justice oppressive.—*Munda cor meum ac labia mea!* for I blaspheme!"

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pressions. Some of these were uttered so loudly, that they seemed to reach the ear of the fugitive, who turned round, looked back for a moment, and then diving into a misty hollow, was for a short time concealed from his eyes.

"Ay, fly, fly!" he muttered, gnashing his teeth; "fly, wretch, fly! But wert thou faster than the mountain-deer, thou couldst not escape the fiend that is already tearing at thy vitals. Fling thyself into the lake, too, and after death, open thy eyes upon a phantom of horror, that will sit before thee for ever!"

Then pursuing with greater activity, he again caught sight of the fugitive, who was ascending the little promontory of the cypress-tree, on which Juan Lerma had first beheld the faces of his countrymen.

"And Hernan Cortes will yet have me speak the story!" he murmured. "Be it so!"

live she, or die she, he shall hear it, and curse the curiosity that compelled it. Ay! and his anguish will be some set-off to the joy of having triumphed over the poor wretch he persecuted. God rest thee, Juan Lerma! for thou at least hast died in ignorance; and but for this mischance, — this fatal mischance, — hadst been worthy of a better fate, and therefore saved from destruction."

As he uttered these broken words, he perceived La Monjonaza, — for it was this unhappy creature whom he followed, — steal over the mound to the right hand, as if turning her steps from the lake landward. But being aware that she had beheld him, and suspecting this to be merely a feint, designed to mislead him, he directed his course to the water-side, and stepping among the rocks and brambles at the base of the hill, passed it in time to behold Magdalena stalking, with a countenance of distraction, towards the lake, as if impelled by

some terrible goadings of mind, to self-destruction.

"Wretched creature!" he cried, springing forwards, and staying her frenzied steps, "what is this you do? Fling not away the grace that is in wait.—*You*, at least, may live and be forgiven."

To his great surprise, the unhappy girl, whose countenance had indicated all the iron determination of desperation, offered not the slightest resistance, while he drew her from the water-side; but turning towards him with the face of a maiden detected in some merry and harmless mischief, she began to laugh; but immediately afterwards burst into tears.

"Good heavens!" said Camarga, with compassion, "are you indeed brought to this pass? What! the mind that even amazed Don Hernan—is it gone? wholly gone? Miserable Magdalena! this is the fruit of sin!"

At the sound of a name so seldom pronounced in these lands, the lady rose from the rock, on which she had suffered herself to be seated, although it was observable that she showed no symptoms of surprise. She gazed fixedly at Camarga for an instant, and a dark frown gathering on her brows, she turned to depart, without reply. Camarga, however, detained her, and would have spoken; but no sooner did she feel his hand laid upon her mantle than she turned suddenly round, with a look of inexpressible fierceness, saying, with the sternest accents of a voice always strikingly expressive:

“Who art thou, that comest between me and my purpose? If a priest or an angel, fly,—for here thou art with contamination; if a man, and a bad man, still fly, lest thou be struck dead with the breath of one deeper plunged in guilt than thyself.—If a devil, then remain, and claim thy prey from the apostate and murderer. Dost thou forbid me even to die?”

"Ay—I do," replied Camarga, trembling yet less at her terrible countenance than her fearful expressions: "I am one who, in the name of heaven,—a name which is alike polluted in thy mouth and in mine—command thee to recall thy senses, if they have not utterly fled, and bid thee, thinking of self-slaughter no longer, leave this land of wretchedness, and, in a cloister, and with a life of penitence, obtain the pardon which heaven will not perhaps withhold."

"Pardon comes not without punishment," said Magdalena, sternly; "and I would not that it should: and for penitence,—the moaning regret that exists without torture and suffering,—know that it is but a mockery. Kill thy friend, and repent,—yet dream not of paradise. Scourge thyself, die on the rack or gibbet, and await thy fate in the grave. Begone; or rest where thou art, and follow me no more."

"Till thou die, or till thou art lodged within the walls of a convent," said Camarga, grasping her arm with a strength and determination she could not resist: "thus far will I follow thee, rave thou never so much. Oh, wretched creature! and wert thou about to rush into the presence of thy Maker, unshriven, unrepenting, unprepared?"

Magdalena surveyed him with a look that changed gradually from anger to wistful emotion; and then again shedding tears, she dropped on her knees, saying, with a tone and manner that went to his heart,

"I will shrive me then, and then let me go, for thy presence persecutes me.—Well, and perhaps it is better; for it is long since I have looked upon a man of God—long since I have spoken with any just Christian but *one*,—and him I have given up to the murderers. Hear me then, and then absolve or condemn as thou wilt, for I judge myself; and I confess to thee,

only that my words may drive thee away,
as would the moans of a coming pestilence.
Hear me then, friar, and then begone from
me."

"Arise," said Camarga, "I seek not thy
confession, at least not now: I have that will
draw it from thee, at a fitter time and place.
In this distant spot, thou art exposed to danger
from the infidels."

"If thou fearest them, away! Why dost
thou trouble me? If thou stayest, listen to my
words; for though they come too late, yet will
they cause thee to do justice to the name, and
pay masses for the soul, of Juan Lerma."

"Speak of Juan Lerma," said Camarga,
with a trembling voice, "and I will indeed
listen to thee. *In nomine Dei Patris, et Filii,
et Spiritus Sancti*, speak and speak truly.
Oured be thou, even by my lips, if thou
speakest that which is false, or concealest
ought that is true!"

"Truth, though I die,—and let me die when it is spoken," said Magdalena, placing her lips with the instinctive reverence of habit to the cross which Camarga extended. As she kissed it, her heart seemed to soften, and she shed many bitter tears, while pouring forth her broken and melancholy story.

"Know, father," she said, not once doubting that she had a true father of the church before her, "that it was my misfortune never to have known the kindness and care of a parent."

"Let that be passed," said Camarga, hurriedly. "Speak not of the sins of thy youth, a thousand times confessed, and a thousand times absolved. Speak of thy coming to the island,—of thy broken vows,—thy—e" But here perceiving that Magdalena started with a sort of affright, at finding how far his knowledge had anticipated her divulgements, he continued, with better discretion, "Thus much

do I know—*how* I know, ask not; and yet thou mayest be told, too, that much of thy fate was interwoven with that of Villafana."

"*My fate, and that of Villafana!*" cried Magdalena, with a withering look of contempt. But instantly changing to a more submissive air, she exclaimed, "*My story*, indeed, father, but not my fate. If he have confessed to you, then do you know enough,—perhaps all. He told you, then, that his avarice, gratified at the expense of a horrible crime,—the destruction of the ship, and the lives of all within it, abbess, nuns, sailors, and all,—was the cause of all my calamities, since it was my hard fate not to perish with the rest. He robbed the ship of the golden and silver church-vessels, when we were near to the port, and made his escape to the shore, leaving us to sink in the midst of a storm then rising. Our pilot having no hope but in running upon the shore, then within sight, ran the vessel among certain

rocks, where it was beaten to pieces. Father, it chanced to be my fate, and mine alone, to be plucked out of that roaring sea, by one to whom, when lying in a gulf ten times more hideous, I refused to stretch out my hand. Father! last night a word from my lips would have saved the life of Juan Lerma, and I did not speak it!"

"Dwell not on this," said Camarga, sternly. "Rather thank heaven that thou wert rendered unable by any exercise of criminal love, to preserve on the earth's surface a wretch, at whose footstep it shuddered."

"Hah!" cried Magdalena, starting up in a transport of indignation, and sending daggers from her eyes, "who art thou, that speakest so falsely and foully of Juan Lerma? Wert thou, instead of a pattering friar, a canonized saint in heaven, still wert thou but a thing of dross and earth, compared with him thou malignest!"

Before Camarga could rebuke this burst of

passion, she sank, as before, to the earth, weeping afresh; for she was in that pitiable state of mental feebleness, in which life seems only to continue in impulses,—a chain of convulsions and exhaustions. “Alas, father,” she continued, with sobs, “you have been taught, like the rest, to misconceive and belie the best and most unfortunate of men;—for such is Juan Lerma;—and you have perhaps joined with the rest to compass his destruction. Has he wronged you? no—you have imagined a wrong. Has he wronged Cortes? no—he has wronged no one; but the ear of Cortes was open to his enemies. Hear me, father, and while you condemn me, listen to the refutation of slander. Father, when I opened mine eyes to the light, and in the presence of him who had saved me, I forgot my vows; nay, I thought that heaven had absolved them in the wreck, and ordained that I should be happy in a new existence. Never before had I looked

upon the world, and the people of the world, —never before had I looked upon Juan Lerma. When had I seen one smile upon me with affection? Father, for a second such smile, I would have moaned again on the wreck, seeing my companions swept from me one by one. I grew cunning and deceitful, and when they asked me of the ship and people, I told them falsehoods, lest they should bring me the veil and the priest, and carry me from his presence. "Alas! and my deceit availed not; he smiled no more; and when Hilario spoke of affection—affection for me, Juan Lerma withdrew without a sigh, without a struggle."

"Saints of heaven!" cried Camarga, starting with horror, gasping for breath, and, in the sense of suffocation, forgetting his assumed character so much as to fling back the cowl that had concealed his features. "Dost thou speak me the truth? On thy life,—on thy hopes of heaven's forgiveness,—on thy love

even for this lost, perhaps this dead, youth;—I charge thee speak me the truth. Went there no more than this between you? And Juan Lerma loved you not? and Villafana belied ye both? And you are not—”

He paused in agitation, unable to utter another word; and Magdalena, surprised as much at his extraordinary interest in her story, as well as confounded by the absence of the tonsure, and the glittering of an iron gorget about his throat, seemed for a moment unable to answer his questions. But summoning spirits at last, she said,

“Thou art not a priest but a layman, a stranger, and a man of sin! But be who thou wilt, friend, or foe, thou knowest now enough of my history to be entitled to know all. Never did man couple my name with shame, and think of any but him who died under the dagger of Villafana. As for Juan

Lerma, not even Cortes, his bitterest enemy, would dare accuse him of a deed of dishonour. Stranger, if thou art interested in the betrayed and murdered Juan, know at least that he died innocent of any wrong to Magdalena."

"Now God be praised for this good word!" said Camarga, dropping on his knees, and speaking with what seemed a distraction of fervour and delight: "God be praised that I may not think, at my death-hour, that my sins have caused among my children the crime of incest! God be praised! God be praised!"

"Incest! *Thy* children!" exclaimed Magdalena, wildly. "What art thou? What is this thou sayest?"

"What do I say? and why need I say it?" cried Camarga, springing up and wringing his hands—"have we not slain him among us? Oh, wretched Magdalena, if, by thine

influence, he was brought to this pass, knew that thou hast slain thine own brother!"

At this strange and exciting revelation, Magdalena, who had, in the ecstasy of expectation, seized upon Camarga's hands with a convulsive grasp, uttered a scream, wild, loud, and thrilling, and yet how unlike to that which rose from her breaking heart in the prison! It was some such cry as might be supposed to come from a despairing Christian, who finds that the gates, which he thinks are conducting him to hell, have suddenly ushered him into the walks of paradise. It mingled fear and astonishment with joy, but joy predominant over the others; and though it sounded as if coming from a bursting heart, it was as if from one bursting in the over-bounded and expansion of a breast released from a mountain of oppression. It echoed over the

lake, and seemed to have called up the spirits thereof; for before its last hysterical echo had vibrated on the ear, there sprang up, as if they had risen from the earth or the waters, six or seven athletic barbarians, flourishing heavy macanas, who rushed at once upon the pair.

At the sight of such unexpected and formidable antagonists, though taken entirely by surprise, Carmarga snatched his concealed sword from the scabbard, leaped with great intrepidity betwixt Magdalena and the nearest savage, who seemed the leader of the party, and made a blow at him, while calling to her,

“Fly! fly! and tell Cortes that thy brother—” But his lips finished not the sentence. Whether it was that he was rendered helpless by long continued disease, was embarrassed by the friar’s cassock, or was really unskilful in the use of weapons, it is certain

that his blade dropped harmless on the *mancana* of the warrior. Before he could recover his guard, the battle-axe of the Mexican fell upon his head with deadly violence, and he rolled, to all appearance a dying man, on the ground.

At the same instant, another warrior clutched upon Magdalena, who, though pale as death, and agitated by a long succession of passions, yet drew the dagger she always carried at her girdle, and aimed it at the breast of the infidel. Before it could do him any harm, it was snatched out of her hand, and she herself caught up as by the grasp of a giant, in the arms of the leader, and hurried to the water. In an instant more, she was placed in a *piragua*, which her capturers drew from a reed-brake hard by, and secured, though not rudely, beyond the possibility of further resistance, among the infidels. They caught up their paddles, uttered a wild yell, and

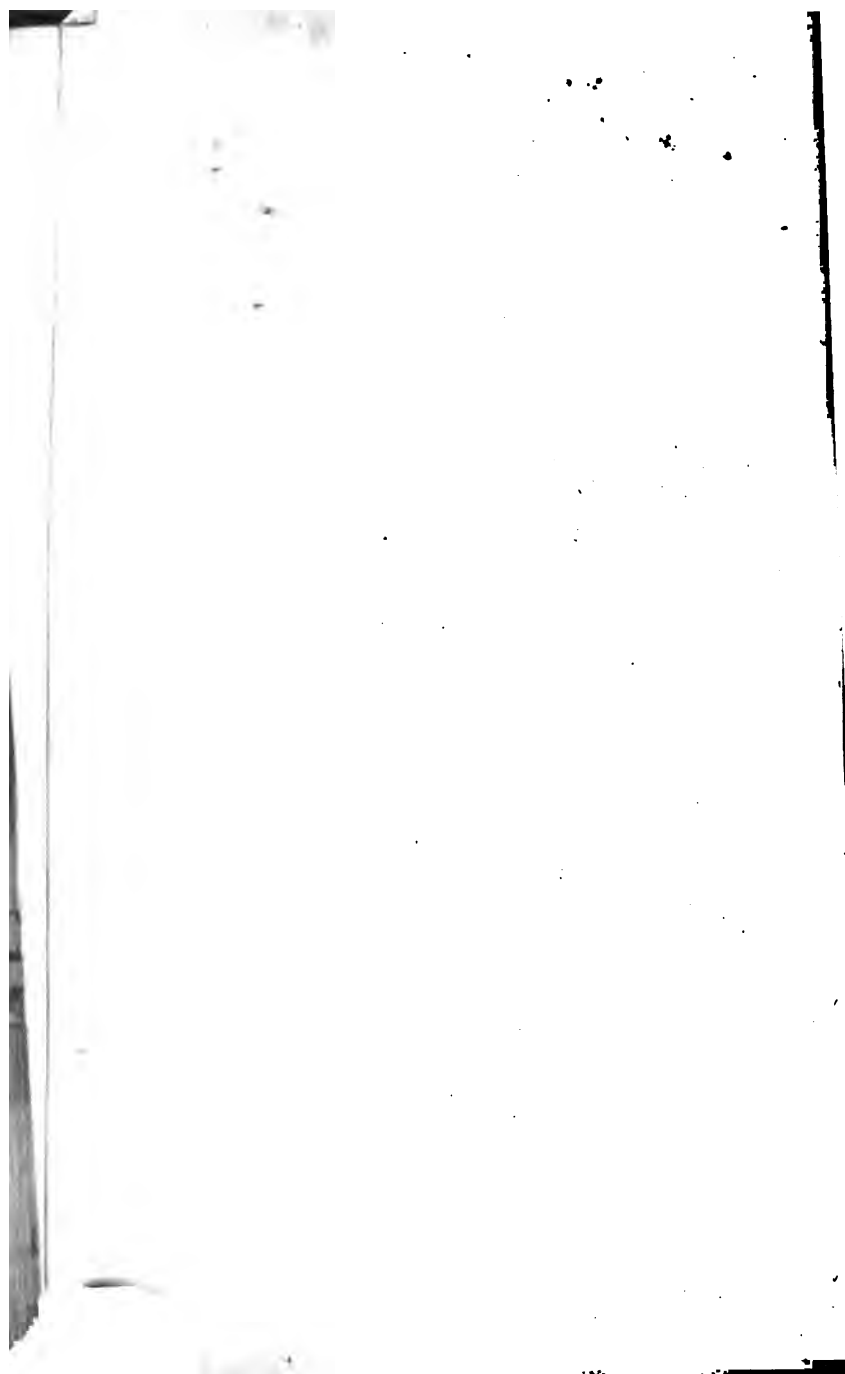
the next moment dashed from the shore,
and were hidden among the mists of the
lake.

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